This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

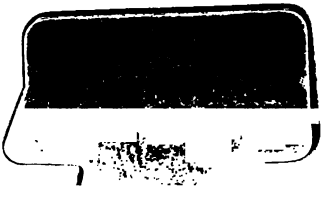
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



THE

MYSTERY OF PAIN, DEATH AND SIN,

AND

DISCOURSES IN REFUTATION OF ATHEISM.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES VOYSEY, B.A.

OF ST. EDMUND HALL, OXFORD; LATE VICAR OF HEALAUGH.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,

14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;

AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1878.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WERTHEIMER, LEA AND CO.,
CIRCUS PLACE, FINSBURY CIRCUS.

PREFACE.

—o—

It may seem rash to add another to the many abortive attempts made by the thoughtful in all ages to solve the mystery of Pain and Sin, to reconcile the present order—or "disorder" as some would call it—with the Sovereign Rule of a Holy God. To many it would appear impossible to say anything fresh upon the subject, and therefore a new book about it could only be a repetition of familiar arguments. No doubt this present work contains much that has been said already, but it also contains enough that is quite new and original to justify its intrusion on public notice. The greater part of it was written and published five years ago, and was reproduced in the *Index* at Boston in Massachusetts. Within the last six months, these lectures were re-delivered at Langham Hall, by request of the congregation; and so rapidly were the reprints exhausted, and so numerous have been applications for their republication, that I could not well refuse to re-issue them.

From a commercial point of view, it might have

been advantageous to have re-cast the form, and obliterated all traces of the sermon-element; but I could not well do this without a considerable sacrifice of both matter and force; and all sensible persons will pay due attention to anything worthy of it, come in what form it may.

I do not pretend to have done more than throw out hints and suggestions as to where the solution of the problems lies. It is still impossible to satisfy all minds alike, or to overcome by logic or rhetoric the inveterate doubts and unbelief of some schools of thinkers. The demand to know everything may be pushed to extremes, and in that case the enquirer is doomed to know less than had he been more patient and trustful.

Part I. is simply introductory. Part II. is devoted to the consideration of Human Suffering; Part III. to that of the lower orders of creation. Part IV. deals with the catastrophes which destroy life on a gigantic scale; Part V. with Death in general, showing it to be a blessing. Part VI. states the problem of moral evil. Part VII. explains the discipline through imperfection and sin. Part VIII. shows what we learn by a sense of sin. Part IX. presents the balance of probabilities between the Theistic and Atheistic theories.

The Gospel of Hope and What it Teaches, is a repudiation of Antinomianism and a statement of the moral value of our religious belief.

The sermon which follows it, on *The Lord's Controversy with His People*, is intended to console the orthodox for the discovery that, although the New Testament teaches the doctrine of endless suffering, the doctrine is not true.

The Second portion of the book is a series of discourses in refutation of Atheism. Part I. of this section points out the proper method of discussing the subject. Part II. shows that man should be made the chief field of our enquiry in searching for evidences of a Divine Being; and treats of the intellect. Part III. deals with the Conscience; Part IV. with the Affections. Part V. draws inferences from the Intellect, Conscience, and Affections of man. Part VI. is occupied by the argument from the Religious Emotions.

I have concluded the work by a discourse on the *Responsibilities of the Free*, which I earnestly commend to the attention of all readers who, in whatever degree, may have become emancipated from the darkness and terror of their old superstitions.

I am indebted to Dr. Andrew Wilson, of Edin-

burgh, and to another friend, for a valuable *Appendix* to the sermon on the sufferings of the lower animals.

In an age like ours when ancient creeds are crumbling into dust, and Faith itself is honeycombed with doubt and discontent, it is to be hoped that an effort of this kind, however imperfect or incomplete, will be welcomed and encouraged by every sincere believer in God, whatever be the particular creed with which his faith is associated. If my words fail to convince a doubter I heartily refer him to a book lately published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, entitled *Theism or Agnosticism*, by the Rev. Brownlow Maitland. I can only regret that these pages were already printed before I saw Mr. Maitland's delightful essays. So completely does he seem to have established the *reasonableness* of faith in the Living God, that I have the greatest pleasure in offering him publicly my warmest thanks for his invaluable aid.

CHARLES VOYSEY.

CAMDEN HOUSE, DULWICH,
May, 1878.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PART I.—MYSTERY OF PAIN AND SIN (INTRODUCTION)	1
,, II.—HUMAN SUFFERING	14
,, III.—ANIMAL SUFFERING	29
,, IV.—CATASTROPHES IN NATURE	42
,, V.—DEATH A BLESSING	56
,, VI.—MORAL EVIL	68
,, VII.—SIN THE RESULT OF A MORAL SENSE	84
,, VIII.—SIN BRINGS US TO GOD	99
,, IX.—FAITH AND UNBELIEF CONTRASTED	112
THE GOSPEL OF HOPE AND WHAT IT TEACHES	126
THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE	139

PART I.—ATHEISM	154
,, II.—MAN THE ONLY KEY TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD	167
,, III.—THE CONSCIENCE	182
,, IV.—THE AFFECTIONS	194
,, V.—INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THE INTELLECT, CONSCIENCE AND AFFECTIONS	205
,, VI.—THE TESTIMONY AFFORDED BY THE RELIGIOUS EMOTIONS	217
THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FREE	232
APPENDIX	247

MYSTERY OF PAIN AND SIN.

PART I.

"*He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.*"

ISAIAH XXV. 7.

IN almost all ancient prophecy, similar to that of my text, there are distinct elements—the local and the universal, the temporary and the abiding, the formal and the essential.

In that which is merely local, temporary and formal, we cannot be expected to feel the same interest as in that which is universal, abiding and essential. We can only with difficulty cast ourselves back into the remote past, so as to enter into the circumstances and sympathize with the feelings of the men of old time; and to that extent we must be the losers. We must forego a considerable amount of benefit which otherwise we should have gained from a more minute knowledge of the writers and of their peculiar surroundings.

Still we can, I think, make good use of many of

those noble words of ancient prophecy in which the Hebrew Scriptures abound. Enough light is still left to show the suitableness of the words to the season, and to enable us to apply them afresh to circumstances in our own times which are nearly parallel.

The words of my text have less in them than we commonly find elsewhere of what is local and temporary. The only instance of it being found in the phrase "in this mountain," where the prophet, manifestly referring to Mount Zion, speaks of it as the centre from which God's great unveiling of Himself should flow. It may be a mere poetical phrase of course, but the context seems to give it a position of greater importance, and it is more likely to refer to some actual occurrence—some great conquest over a foe—which Israel was to celebrate in the citadel of Jerusalem. However this may be, we pass over what is merely local and temporary in the prediction, and direct our thoughts to what is universal and abiding. "The Lord will destroy . . . the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations."

We will first consider the assumption of the prophet as to the covering and the vail spread over all people, and next his own glorious anticipation of its removal. He assumes that there is a covering cast over all people, and a vail spread over all nations. Elsewhere this writer speaks of a "people who walked in darkness," and of men who dwelt "in the land of the shadow of death"—figures as mournful as they are true.

To any intelligent mind it must be needless to explain that this covering, vail, darkness, is nothing less than ignorance. Ignorance, itself only a negative, is best expressed by a negative emblem such as "darkness." One who does not know a given subject is said to be "in the dark" about it. Truth is called the "light" of truth. Light not merely reveals objects previously unperceived, but it enables us to discern accurately the relations of those objects to each other. The order of nature is first darkness then light—first ignorance then knowledge—the positive taking the place of the negative. This has been the law in the development of mankind as a race, just as it is the law of our development as individuals. There has been first the covering of darkness, the vail of ignorance, followed by—not the full light of day—but, at all events, the gleam of dawn, the twilight which ushers in the rising sun. But it is not of general ignorance and general knowledge that I would now speak, but of one particular branch of human thought, suggested as it is by the whole chapter from which my text is taken The prophet had begun with a song of praise for some national deliverance, and from that he goes further and wider in his sympathies for all mankind, as though he had been led by his own personal or national anxieties to think about the rest of his fellow-men, who, quite as much as himself and his countrymen, needed "a strength in their distress, a refuge from the storm." I do not wish to put a meaning into the prophet's words which does not

belong to them, but it seems almost certain that his expressions about the "covering and the vail spread over all people" had a special reference to the darkness of men's minds about the dealings of God, and their erroneous interpretations of the meaning and purport of suffering. If you refer to the preceding chapter, you will find just the same sentiments of horror and dread as those with which some of our preachers are at this moment terrifying, or trying to terrify, their congregations. "Fear and the pit and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare . . . The earth is utterly trodden down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly." This is only a fragment, but enough to shew that for the time being, while trouble was pressing upon him, the world looked black with threatening storm, and the prophet poured out his fear and despair from the thick darkness of his own soul. By-and-by the clouds clear away, God's purposes are unfolded, and he knows now that all that dismal foreboding was purely imaginary, the result of an overpowering darkness, which made him paralysed for action and palsied with fear, and peopled his brain with incoherent horrors and spectres. The cheerful light of day has driven these repulsive forms into the outer darkness, has made clear to him things as they are, and himself as he is, and has brought back the healthy calm of a well-

ordered mind, steadfast, reflecting, hopeful. He alludes, then, as I think, to his own dismal view of this life and of this life's troubles as a covering, a vail spread over the souls of men, which prevents their seeing things as they are.

Was he right in thinking this vail of ignorance universal? Most assuredly. Not a religion in the wide world but what has had its basis in this necessary ignorance. If one might make an exception anywhere, it would be the exalted Theism of some of the Hebrew Psalmists and Prophets; but the mass of the people around them shared the universal ignorance of the world at large, in looking at human affairs with a desponding eye, and in murmuring against the decrees of Providence whenever they showed the darker side of His most righteous control. Making some allowance for exceptions then, it is very nearly literally true that a covering has been cast over all people, and a vail spread over all nations, by which the events of life have been darkened, and the prophets of human destiny have been over-clouded. The main religions of the world start from the assumption that there is something wrong somewhere. That the good purpose of a good God has been thwarted. That there is war in heaven; that a raging rebel-spirit nearly omnipotent has hurled his defiance in the face of the Holy One; and that they are now engaged in a deadly encounter of which we men and women are the helpless victims. The religions of the world begin their earliest catechisms with lessons of gloom, and end them with

lessons of despair. Not a sorrow in the world, nor a tear shed, not an aching limb, nor a burdened heart, but is set down to the devil, or to some agency hostile to all that is beneficent and good. Sin and sorrow are joined together in unholy bonds to confound our moral sense, and to bring discredit on the Most High.

The religions of the world for the most part teach us to think human life at best an awful lottery. To many it is made to seem a positive curse which may end—nay, which cannot end—but must be lived out and out to the furthest horizon of time in accumulating torment, and then when this point is reached, it must be begun again and again for ever and for ever—the inevitable certainty and hopeless impossibility of change being the keenest of its unendurable pangs. But if we turn our backs on such pictures, and call them heathenish—(remember that during the approaching season of Advent thousands will be saying all these awful things and worse than these, and saying them too to the young)—if we, however, repudiate them, is the most favourable orthodox teaching free from that mournful view of life and its sorrows which we can only describe as *darkness?* I fear not. How rarely do we hear little children taught from earliest infancy the blessedness of sufferings and disappointments. Not from the pulpits can we gather such moralizing over the ills of life as will help our feeble footsteps over the rugged ground. The only sufferings which are bepraised and recommended are those of asceticism and puri-

tanical austerity which do no one any good. The aches and pains which come to us in the ordinary evolution of the course of nature, seldom form a text for the thanksgiving of the preacher. But I do not mean hereby to say that no orthodox religious teachers have dwelt upon the sanctity and the blessedness of sorrow. They speak often of "sanctified affliction." They would have strangely missed a great portion of Bible teaching had they not sometimes done so. They have many of them said and sung the most beautiful things about this "sanctified affliction," but then this was only for the elect—for the true believers—for the faithful sons and daughters of Mother Church. To all outsiders no blessing can come through affliction except their possible conversion to some particular orthodoxy through fear of hell. And all their teaching is vitiated by tracing pain to the sin of Adam; to an implied defeat of God's purposes. We were trained to look at all sorrowful events from *our* side—our narrow, human, earthly side of the question. We feel a present pain and we can only call it by its right name and be impatiently restless till it is removed. But if we would be more than animals, more than mere children, if we would be *men*, we ought to school ourselves to quite a different mode of regarding the sufferings of life, and to accustom ourselves to look on pain in all its forms as serving a purpose in the plans of an Almighty and All-wise Father quite as indispensable and sacred as that of His choicest gifts.

Physical pain itself would be wonderfully mitigated by such a view of its purpose; we see this illustrated by the man who will plunge the red-hot iron into his own bleeding and poisoned arm, nerved for the fearful infliction simply by the strong belief that it is the only way to save his life. And so were we to have the vail removed from the sorrows and sufferings of life, and see behind it the necessary benefit they are designed to secure to us, we should be physically better fortified to endure them, and they would lose more than half their sting.

It is hardly fair to blame the religions of the world for fostering the idea that sorrow and suffering are hostile to man and foreign to God's government, without noticing that many who have renounced religion altogether take the same view and are quite as impatient of pain and evil as the most orthodox believer in the devil and the fall of man. Religious and irreligious alike, the world at large is not yet developed enough to embrace that optimism which reconciles man both to his present lot, and to any discipline or sorrow which has yet to come. But one and all will surely admit that it would be a very grand thing to believe in if it were only true. One and all would welcome as a light from heaven any testimony which could assure their hearts that not one single event, modification, or change ever happens by chance, that all things—the minutest as well as the most vast of Nature's operations—are the result of deliberate forethought and design, and therefore everything has been provided for and fixed

in its proper place in the long chain of destiny by One who is not merely over all things supreme, but also all-wise and infinitely good. Men would be only too glad to be convinced that no permanent *harm* could by any possibility ever touch them, that no pain should be purposeless, that no sorrow should be fruitless of abiding joy, no disappointment or loss should happen but what carried in its issue a gratification unspeakably higher and better. Who would not be glad, I say, to believe this of the events of life, not merely for himself but for every one dear to him? Now, I say, not only that such a belief is reasonable, but that any other view of human life is incompatible with a belief in the goodness, or wisdom, or power of God. If any *real* harm—permanent, unmitigated, incurable mischief—can befall you or me, then that is so much subtracted either from the ability of God to take care of us, or from His wisdom in arranging for the contingencies arising out of manifold forces, or from the fidelity of His loving regard for His children who are dependent on His care. The world saw this long ago, and as they objected to the ills of life, not discerning their value, they invented a devil to take all the blame, which was the most absurd possible way of limiting the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, all the while they were pretending that in these qualities God was infinite. This myth of the devil only put back further into the darkness the great difficulty it was intended to solve. If the devil was not infinite like God, then he was created; if the

devil was not created then God was not Infinite. If the devil was created, and in such a way that in course of time he would or might become a source of eternal injury to some of God's creatures, then God is responsible for every grain of that injury, and He could neither have been All-wise nor All-good if He created the devil at all.

I make no apology for dwelling on this A B C of enquiry into God's dealings. It is absolutely essential to a proper view of the ills of life to know where the blame of them, if any, really lies. The orthodox religions dare not face the truth; they are committed to a theory which is transparently absurd as an explanation of sorrow, but yet they cannot forego it lest they should speak blasphemy. But I think the prophet Isaiah would not have hesitated to lay at the Creator's door all the ills that flesh is heir to. And I do not hesitate to say in the face of my God and of this congregation that God and God alone is ultimately responsible for every and the most minute event, good or evil, which has befallen any one of His creatures. Of course there is no blasphemy in my saying this, because my chief object is to urge you to disbelieve in absolute evil—to believe only in absolute good—to take a wiser view than the world and the Churches take of things painful or unpleasant—to perceive behind every cloud which hangs over your life the smiles and assurances of a Father's loving purpose. In a sense everything is holy—everything is in its place; our very darkness and gloom have served their turn in the discipline and

development of mankind ; even our false creeds and our unwholesome fear of the devil have not been destitute of lessons of eternal and priceless value.

The prophet's bright dream seems drawing near to its fulfilment. On every hand, and from all parts of the world we are receiving tokens of a happier, and let us add, a nobler view of human life and destiny. The "wreck and rescue" theory of mankind is dying out; the "progress" theory is taking its place. The more clearly men perceive that there is no room for chance anywhere in the universe, the more certain are their convictions that everything is done or allowed from a good motive, and must ultimately have a good result. And the most remarkable feature in the whole case is that men are learning these happier lessons about the dealings of God by their own more devoted exertions in well-doing. As they do more, and strive more, to promote the welfare of their fellow-creature, the scales fall from their eyes; the mists melt and disperse under the genial warmth; the clouds are rolled back, and the glorious Sun—the Sun of Righteousness—arises with healing on his wings, bringing strength, consolation and hope. Men intent on making the best of this life, on using every opportunity of doing good which comes in their path, begin naturally to believe in a God whose every purpose must be good, and whose transforming power is inexhaustible. They pass out of darkness into a marvellous light, they awake out of the old-world night-mare of a fallen race, a doomed world, and a triumphant devil, to see that

under God's loving and guiding hand human beings have been marching upwards and onwards with steady pace, have been growing up out of purblind infancy into childhood, out of childhood into boyhood, and so on still ever advancing, and helped all along from stage to stage by those very agencies of pain and shame which once we thought so hostile, and which cast a threatening shadow over the pathway of mankind. The curse is seen to be a blessing, the doom is read as the charter of our hopes. Every throb of pain tells now of God's ceaseless and tender regard; every thrust of remorse is God's touch to remind us that we are His; every sigh of regret bears witness of hope which cannot deceive us; every farewell which rends our hearts is a pledge of Everlasting Love.

My friends, let us remember that the covering is the fog which has risen from our own atmosphere; that the vail has been woven out of our own fears by our own superstitions, and that we must rend it for ourselves. The warmth of God's countenance shining behind our clouds will soon dissolve them; but we must do our part likewise to clear our own vision and to remove our own vail. We must think more about others and less about ourselves. We must watch more closely the facts of life and the footsteps of God as he leaves His track upon the pathway of humanity. We must learn to give Him as much credit for good intentions as we would give to our most trusty friend on earth, and seek to know what His goodness must be by doing

all the good we ever can. "Then shall our light break forth as the morning, and our darkness be as the noonday."

"He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of His people will He take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it."

"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them and not forsake them."

PART II.

"He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

LAMENTATIONS iii. 33.

AT the outset of our meditations this morning, I wish to make it clear what I intend to do. It must not be supposed that I am so foolish or so arrogant as to pretend to come before you completely equipped to solve all the mystery of pain and sin. The utmost I can do is very little, and that is to set before you certain facts which prove that the suffering of humanity is on the whole necessary and beneficial; I do not attempt to explain every extreme and exceptional case of apparently needless pain. So far as it is possible we will confine our attention now to physical suffering as borne by man, leaving for another occasion the subject of the suffering endured by the lower animals.

Some of my hearers will perhaps be dissatisfied if I proceed on the assumption that there is a perfectly good God, without having first proved that there is one. But there are good reasons for this course. In the first place, I do not believe that the existence of such a God is mathematically demonstrable; although the probabilities in favour of the assumption are infinitely greater than the probabilities

against it. And in the next place, our present purpose is only to meet, and if possible to refute, certain objections brought forward by the Atheist. He says this pain of man and brute is an evidence of cruelty or helpless incapacity on the part of the world's Ruler and Ordainer. We have to show that the pain is an evidence not of cruelty but of benevolence—in which case it would become unnecessary to argue the question of God's capacity or incapacity to prevent it.

Of one thing we may assure the Atheist—that we do not stand here to make excuses for our God. We shall not forgive God anything. We may and we must confess that some of His ways are as yet inscrutable, and that some of the evils in the world are not yet reconcileable with our ideas of perfect righteousness. But in admitting this we affirm the high probability that the difficulty of this reconcilement lies in our own selves, in our extremely partial and limited knowledge; that it would be unreasonable to expect that a creature like man, of comparatively so recent appearance in the universe, and only emerging but yesterday out of gross ignorance, should be able all at once not only to understand every phenomenon around him, but also to perceive its full moral significance. To this confession of our own inability, we also add our affirmation that as the moral difficulties are not yet solved, so they may possibly find an explanation which would fully vindicate the honour of God. The doubtful cases are still *sub judice*, and if we may not use them on

our side of the argument, our opponents are likewise forbidden to use them on theirs.

The final issue which alone can settle the dispute is hidden alike from both the disputants. We have a right, therefore, to withhold our condemnation of the Divine Ruler of the world on all charges which have not been made out. At the same time, if only one such charge can be brought home to our Creator, we shall feel bound to throw up the case. As I said just now, we are not going to make excuses for God, or to palliate what our hearts and consciences declare to be wrong. Let our adversaries find but one flaw in the Deity, and they may take Him away. We will have no God who is not morally blameless, "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His thoughts." At the same time it is necessary to protest against the exaggeration into which some persons fall when seized with a fit of discontent and indignation. The amount of physical suffering in the world is spoken of just as if one could add together the pains endured by different individuals.

The only pain in the world of men and women and children is each person's own pain. The multiplication of individuals suffering pain, does not really increase the quantity of pain beyond the exact amount borne by each individual. When pain is spoken of in the abstract, for the convenience of language, remember it ceases to be pain. Only in one way can pain be increased by numbers of sufferers—by *sympathy*. That is, it adds to the pain which I already feel, to know that A. B. and C. are

suffering likewise or worse. But the only pain which is *real* is what I or A. or B. or C. suffer from all sources whatever, whether from disease of our own, or from sympathy with others. The pain of A. B. or C. respectively, like my own, stands alone —you cannot add our pains together, for my pain is neither A.'s, nor B.'s, nor C.'s, nor can the pain which one individual suffers be transferred to another. The mere fact that there are and have been millions on millions of sufferers in the world does not really multiply the amount of suffering, because each individual bears his own suffering, and cannot bear that of any one else. Granting, for the sake of argument, that some persons suffer much more pain than others do, then some one person must have suffered the greatest amount, or the acutest degree of pain, and *that* one person's pain constitutes by itself the sum total of the objector's charge against Almighty goodness, so far as the quantity and degree are concerned.

We must then protest against the assumption that the number of sufferers at all adds to the charge against God's goodness. We have said our worst against the beneficence of His rule when we have presented the case of the one human being who has suffered most. He may be chargeable on *other* grounds for having made not only two or three, but thousands of generations of sufferers; but what I urge is that we cannot make that into an accusation of having multiplied the *quantity* of pain. And if pain can be justified in the case of a single sufferer,

it will go far to justify it in the case of countless generations of sufferers likewise.

It is so common to hear people complain that God leaves thousands and thousands of people to die of hunger and disease. Statistics are always being quoted to shew, if anything, that God is unmindful of the sufferings of men; and any great calamity which destroys or renders miserable a great many individuals is looked upon with greater suspicion and muffled rebellion (because of the *numbers* of people involved) than is the isolated case of very acute suffering. Now, is it really an aggravation of human pain to have it fall simultaneously on a great number of individuals, or does it make no difference to the quantity of pain borne by each one? If anything, I believe it mitigates the suffering to fall in this way on many persons at once. But what I want to make clear is that the mere fact of many hundreds suffering at once from the same calamity does not increase the actual quantity of the pain endured by each individual. You cannot, as I said, add up the pains of several individuals as you can add up the number of their heads and hands.

There is also a tendency to exaggerate the proportion of pain to pleasure. As a rule, pain occupies a comparatively small portion of each man's life, while the greater part by far is passed in physical painlessness or in actual enjoyment. They are the rarest possible exceptions of whom it may be said that their pain preponderates over their pleasure. If, however, pain be a wrong inflicted by God on man,

then the fact of the preponderance of pleasure over pain does not excuse the infliction of pain at all. One poor sufferer wrongfully tortured would be enough to overthrow our case. A single pain inflicted needlessly, or without hope of adequate benefit in its issue, would of itself be sufficient to condemn the moral government of the world. Nevertheless, it is a gratuitous complication of the dispute to resort to exaggerations in regard to the preponderance of pain over pleasure.

The first and most obvious of the uses of pain is its necessity as a means of our safety and protection. On this point I need not dwell, as it must be manifest to every intelligent person that our very lives depend on our susceptibility to pain—aye, and on our actual experience of it. For the susceptibility would be of no use without the experience. If hunger were not painful, infants would not take food. If falling down were not painful, children would never learn to walk upright. The thousand things that men and women now do to maintain their health and strength, have been all learnt in the school of disease and pain. If susceptibility to pain be temporarily suspended, as in the case of deep sleep, extreme intoxication, or apoplexy, the subject of these conditions is absolutely helpless and bereft of all power of self-protection.

In the next place it must be observed that susceptibility to pleasure involves likewise the susceptibility to pain. Every avenue of the one is opened likewise to the other. And if we were to be relieved of

our sensibility to pain we should thereby forfeit our capacity for physical enjoyment. I go further still, and say that what makes physical pleasure to be what it is (in many instances) is nothing less than its contrast to preceding or well-remembered pain. The pain, in fact, is one cause of the pleasure. Some of the functions of the body, as we well know, are performed automatically, without our consent and scarcely, if at all, under our control. The beating of the heart is one of these, and is generally performed without any sensation of pleasure. But should its regular pulsations be interrupted or disordered by disease, we become immediately conscious of pain, and when the pain is relieved, we are conscious of a pleasure in the return of the normal pulsation which we never felt before. In the same way, if the normal action of the lungs be interrupted by painful breathing, the restoration to healthy action is a positive sensation of pleasure entirely new to us. These illustrations serve to shew what I mean when I say that certain pleasures are actually created by antecedent pains. And we can none of us compute how much of our actual pleasure is thus derived from contrast with pain. We all know too by experience that almost all pleasures, if prolonged and not alternated with their absence or positive pain, lose their essence of enjoyment, pall upon the taste, and in some instances, actually turn to pains. Uninterrupted pleasure then is an impossibility—a contradiction in terms. To enjoy pleasure at all there must be alternation with sensations more or less painful.

The next important fact about pain is that it rouses opposition. Pain is no sooner felt than we put forth every effort to be rid of it. When we hear of the sufferings of others the instinct of rebellion against pain is so strong that we are generally moved to do all in our power to help the sufferer; and if we know it to be beyond our power to remove or to alleviate, we try to harden our feelings by a mental effort, or to drive the subject altogether from our thoughts. Nothing is more certain about pain than that we are constructed on purpose to fight against it, and to do all in our power to avoid it; when it is unavoidable to weaken its severity; when incurable, to become hardened to its effects. From this we gather that it is the Creator's will that we should never suffer more than we can possibly help —that one of the great ends of our being is to contend with, and if possible, to annihilate physical suffering, to rid the world of it as soon as we can. The Archbishop of York reminds us that "the system of Schopenhauer is built upon the argument that as all life is an effort, and all effort in its nature is painful, the pains of life must preponderate." "But," His Grace replies, "it would surely be more true to say that pleasure of some sort accompanies and completes all natural efforts, and that there is no real pleasure that is not part of an active condition."

What follows from this rebellion against suffering? Why, we owe everything that we have done, and all that we are, to the battle between

humanity and physical pain. It has made us restless and inquiring; all our knowledge has sprung out of our pain, just as every man amongst us owes his life to-day to the pains of hunger which he felt when an infant. Pain has been man's intellectual as well as his physical and moral schoolmaster. Had it not been for pain and the restless desire to prevent or to remove it, there would have been no cultivation of the mind, no discoveries of stored-up treasure, no reading of the wonderful books of Nature which are spread out before us. Our inevitable sufferings have been a perpetual stimulus of our minds to knowledge, of our hands to skill, of our social instincts to civilization.

In order to secure this contest with its consequences, of course pain must be painful—"No chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards"—afterwards—I leave you to finish the text according to each one's own aspiration. I, for one, believe that it must yield "the peaceable fruits of righteousness to all them that are exercised thereby." If suffering were not felt to be the evil thing it is called, we should not fight against it, and try to conquer it as we do. And we cannot wonder if we find the instinct of rebellion against it, which the Creator himself has put into our natures, leading us now and then to extremes of resentment, and even of murmuring against His method of training and discipline.

Another of the most palpable effects of suffering is the cultivation of our sympathies. If a "fellow-

feeling makes us wondrous kind," and suffering like "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," surely that baptism of fire is the most exalted consecration by which we could be admitted into the fold of God. It is true, and men may prove it for themselves, that a great run of earthly and physical comfort has a tendency to close the avenues of our affection, and to narrow the channels of our heart's love, unless a very high quality of soul be already in possession of the will and affections. Those who suffer constantly and intensely—especially the sufferings of acute poverty—are more brotherly and tender to each other than we could have dreamed of. Can you imagine a poor half-starved family entreating the messenger of mercy to go first to a poorer neighbour before they would accept relief themselves? But this is what I have heard with my own ears. Can you imagine those who have only two blankets in all the house lending one to a neighbour in sickness who had none at all? But this is what I have seen. Can you imagine a poor woman, enfeebled by disease and hardly able to stand, acting as monthly nurse to women still poorer than herself, "and all for love and nothing for reward," till she fell down and died? But this, too, is what I have seen. Travel abroad and you will find that common danger and common suffering makes warm-hearted brothers of those who at home and in prosperity would not even exchange a friendly greeting. But I need not enlarge on what is becoming now so well known, that one of the

immediate results of physical suffering is to make the heart tender and to fill it with sympathy.

Scarcely second to this tremendous gain is the cultivation of our own fortitude, powers of endurance, and manly effort to be patient under acute pain. Without pain there would be no courage, nothing to brave. Without pain there would be no patience, nothing to bear. Without pain there would be no aspiration, nothing to disturb the hum-drum monotony of physical ease. Pleasure itself would lose half its zest were there no pain. And so it does not surprise us that fresh kinds of suffering rise to take the place of those which have disappeared. The struggle for existence has taken quite new forms in the present epoch, and has to be fought out with a new generation of foes. As fast as one point of progress is reached, new demands are made upon our activity, fresh obstacles stand in our path, to stimulate renewed efforts after the goal. If, then, we find that all our intellectual and moral progress is directly traceable to the rebellion against pain implanted in our nature, it will not be hard to recognize a wisdom higher than our own in the appointment of the suffering condition of humanity.

Still there are those who object that beneficial results do not always flow from the infliction of pain. It must be admitted that sometimes pain and sorrow produce at first the reverse of those virtues which could not have birth without suffering. Great agony will sometimes produce

cowardice, frenzy, hardness and cruelty. The same appalling catastrophe will ennoble some and debase others; make some brave, others craven; some generous, others selfish. These apparent anomalies are to be partially explained by the fact that what will do a man good at one stage of his progress is fatal at another—what exasperates him at one stage, will at another raise and subdue him. It is contrary, however, to all analogy that we should be able satisfactorily to account for every anomaly and exception to the general order of Divine Providence. Our faculties and our experience are at present too limited to enable us to make a perfect induction, and we can but aim at a general view which is sound and reasonable as far as it goes. Others have objected that God might have done all the good He intends for man without the pain and suffering; and that if He could not have done so, He is not Almighty. To this objection one can only reply that in the order of Nature there are already many things which cannot be done. A body cannot have at one and the same time the shape of a sphere and of a cube. No one thing can be in two places at once, and so forth. God Himself cannot undo any already accomplished fact. He may twist and turn its consequences as He pleases, but He cannot alter the course of events which have already taken place. I think it almost borders on childishness to substitute the suggestions of our confessed ignorance for the actual arrangements of a Providence, whose wisdom in other matters we unhesitatingly adore.

Who, we may ask, are the loudest complainers against the sufferings of the world? Certainly not those who have suffered most, but those who have suffered least. My own experience teems with illustrations. I submitted this sermon to two friends of mine, one of whom leads a life of almost constant pain, and the other is blessed with constant and robust health. The latter, who hardly knows what pain is, was vehement against the present order of things, while the former, whose sufferings are exceptionally severe, cheerfully acquiesces in a condition of pain as an indispensable discipline and blessing from a Heavenly Father's hand. Such examples—and they are numberless—are more eloquent and convincing than our most cogent arguments.

Compared with the advantages to be derived from pain in this life only, a suffering condition is not an unfair price to pay for them. And if, as we devoutly hope, those advantages will grow greater to all eternity, we may well say with the Apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh in us a far more eternal and exceeding weight of glory." By the ordinary essayist on pain, pain is generally spoken of as if it were incessant and eternal. But as a matter of fact few men and women suffer all through their lives without cessation, and even then death sets them free. Instead of being eternal, pain is begun and ended in every case within the short

space of one hundred years. The worst and most excruciating and the most incessant physical torture seldom reaches *that* limit of duration—and what is that to Eternity? The infant crying for its first meal suffers far longer during those few minutes in proportion to its subsequent life on earth, than men and women suffer in their whole lives in proportion to the life of the world to come.

But whichever way we look at physical suffering, we can only come to the conclusion of my text, viz.: that if a perfectly good God is the Author and Ruler of our lives and conditions, it may in a certain sense be said truly of Him, "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." That is, not one grain of pain or sorrow is inflicted wantonly, or without a good purpose, but only from the necessity of things; and that, judging by our own tenderness of heart, we may be quite sure that He would not put upon us the slightest affliction which was unnecessary to our eternal welfare.

There is much pain in the world (perhaps by far the largest share of it), which is manifestly necessary to our own physical safety, without which—so senseless and ignorant is man—thousands would fall victims to the untamed forces of nature. Such pain is manifest blessing, but it has not been chiefly present to my mind in this discourse. I have been thinking much more of those pains and sorrows which *seem* to be purposeless, and which no forethought of ours could avert. Avoidable suffering is always the result of so much sin—of a guilty neglect

of God's known laws for which there is no excuse. But unavoidable suffering—suffering which is at present practically unavoidable through our own ignorance or through the tyranny of others—ought very soon to become avoidable; ought gradually to pass over into the category of man's conquered foes never to rise again to his dismay. But while it is for us unavoidable, it will not paralyse our efforts to overcome and cast it out to believe all the possible good purposes which our Maker had in view in bringing us face to face with a misery too terrible for our imperfect powers of resistance. It will even fortify our hearts to believe that though God's hand has ordained every pain that we bear, yet He never wishes us to bear a single pain which we can conquer or avoid; and that the direct use of pain in human discipline is to call forth that vigorous rebellion against it which will end ultimately in its complete removal. If pain did nothing more for us than to fill us with a burning sympathy, which not only made us scrupulously careful not to inflict pain on others, but also to do all we possibly could to relieve and remedy the sufferings around us, we might well bless the Lord God on High for his mercy to man, and say with hearts full of faith and adoration, with eyes open to every fact of human circumstance, and with minds enlightened by the deepest and most careful reflection, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good."

PART III.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

ISAIAH lv. 8, 9.

I AM literally besieged with letters pressing me for an answer to the questions, Why should there be so much apparently needless suffering in the world? How can we, in the presence of these painful facts, believe in the existence and sovereign control of a good God?

On every hand such and kindred discussions are raised. One hardly ever touches the subject of Religion without the conversation drifting rapidly to this central and vital enquiry.

The doubts which cluster around it darken many a soul, alike among the fortunate and the unfortunate. Old men and women shake their heads over it as an insoluble problem, while the young talk flippantly of it as a reason for dismissing the subjects of religion and God altogether from their minds.

The doubt itself is neither to be rebuked nor to be unheeded. The former would be unjust, the latter suicidal. In this age of transition—more momentous by far than that which ushered in the birth of

natural science—it is indispensable to the adoption of the right course, to probe every difficulty with an unflinching hand; and as loyalty to truth is still our sheet-anchor during the storm of sceptical questionings and denials, for very truth's sake we should give our minds free play to challenge every doubtful position, every unwarrantable assumption. If the truth demand our acceptance of a theory of the universe from which present justice, hope for the future, and God Himself must be excluded, the bitter draught must be swallowed, and at all cost to our own peace of mind we must believe exactly and only what is true. It is a false peace which is bought by shutting our eyes to facts, or by evading the main point at issue.

I believe I am doing my duty in making another effort to meet the objections before us, my only ground of hesitation being that I foresee that some persons will be strengthened in their unbelief in proportion to my failure in the endeavour to satisfy their doubts; that a weak advocacy—and I fear that none other can be forthcoming from any quarter at present—will only injure the cause which I would defend. But in anticipation of these results, I must urge that it would be folly in the highest degree either to pin one's faith on another man's reasoning, or to reject permanently what may be a right conclusion, because another man has reasoned it out falsely. Whatever the truth may be, it cannot be dependent on the ability or the inability of any man to convince you of it. We are all alike in some

degree of darkness about this problem of suffering, and those who are nearest to the light are still labouring under the disadvantages, and being misled by the uncertainties, of the twilight.

I begin my answer, then, by frankly confessing that I do not know how to solve the problem any more than all the wiser and more learned persons who have attempted its solution. The utmost I can do is to put before you the thoughts which have soothed my own doubts, and have strengthened my own faith. I speak of course from the Theistical stand-point, and assume the existence of God. This is a begging of the question, some will say, and so it is; but on no other assumption is suffering to be explained at all.

These consoling thoughts may be summed up in the words of my text, which of course we take to be not the words of the ever-silent God Himself, but of a man like ourselves, who, as thousands of others before and after him have done, meditated on the same mysterious themes as those now under our notice. In dramatic language, God is represented as saying, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Here are two propositions; one manifestly demonstrable, God's thoughts and ways (in this matter of suffering) are not our thoughts and ways. The other is not demonstrable, but axiomatic, and I believe it would be accepted readily by all

persons of sound mind, inasmuch as the idea of God involves His superiority, especially His moral superiority, over all His creatures. The most confirmed Atheist would grant at once that if there be a God at all, He must be supremely good. And it is this axiomatic truth, inseparable from human conceptions of God, which is now working indirectly at the bottom of these very proper, but very sad, questionings about the sufferings of the world. These sufferings are taken to be indications of an immoral —or we will say a defective moral—Government; and as long as they are so regarded, men cannot help but question the very existence of God; for God could neither do, nor permit, wanton and purposeless evil.

In the days of Isaiah men's thoughts about the earth were that it was an extended plane fixed immovably in space, and that the sun performed its daily revolution around it, at no such stupendous distance as it really is. Clearly we now see that men's thoughts in this instance were not God's thoughts, and yet that they were not absolutely contrary to His thoughts. His thoughts were only transcendantly higher. So far as the phenomena were described subjectively, they were true and exactly such as God intended them to be perceived. Each portion of the earth appears to a human being as a vast plane, more or less rugged, and is assuredly felt to be immovably still; the sun too appears to revolve around the planet. But when the whole truth was discovered, the second axiom-

tic position was verified. As the heavens were higher than the earth, so were God's thoughts higher than the thoughts of men. The earth was found to be a globe of such vastness that no human being has yet been able to picture its size in imagination. It was found to be not stationary and fixed at all, but to be floating in space without any solid support whatever, and revolving with breathless rapidity in diurnal and annual motions, producing the phenomena of day and night by revolution on its own axis, and the phenomena of the seasons by its circuit round the sun. And as for the sun itself, compare for an instant what is now known of the enormous mass, of its distance from the earth, and of its own majestic march through space, attended by its planets and comets; what has been recently discovered of the nature of its photosphere, and the magic harmony between its pulsations and the magnetic changes which occur on the earth—compare all this, I say, with the knowledge possessed by Isaiah and the Chaldæan astrologers, and then how perfect it is as an illustration of the prophet's words: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." So in this one matter of cosmogony, you see man has grown higher and nearer in thought to God. The future of sun, moon, and earth is still unknown, but we may reckon with tolerable certainty that as our knowledge expands there will be far more to wonder at

in silent adoration. Was it not Kepler who exclaimed, after verifying some grand calculation, "Oh my God! I think Thy thoughts after Thee"?

Now, I would apply this double principle to the subject before us. Clearly God's thoughts about suffering are not our thoughts; nor His ways our ways. There can be no question that if man had had the making of his own world, and had been able to do as he pleased, he would have shut out all sorrow; he would have made pain and grief impossible. Moreover, had he been only as loving, tender and compassionate as the best of mankind now are, he would have shut out pain and suffering from the lives of all the inferior animals. He would have not only satisfied the desire of every living thing, but he would have taken care not to create desires which were not to be amply satisfied. There would have been no death, no killing, no fear, no torture of mind or body. Assuming of course that God is, and is responsible for the present state of things, His thoughts and ways in regard to suffering are manifestly not ours. The question only remains—Are His thoughts and ways higher or lower than ours? To be wantonly or even unmindfully cruel would be to be *below* men's thoughts and ways. To give life, when it could be withheld, only to be spent in fruitless misery would be a crime against even an aphis or a worm. To create longings, desires and aspirations—even in the heart of a grub—and not to gratify them is an act of unvarnished cruelty.

But myriads of creatures seem to us so to suffer,

now under our very eyes, and to have suffered in dire succession almost since the world began. The questions to be met here, then, are—

1. Do the creatures really suffer as they appear to do?

2. Are they each and all satisfied or dissatisfied with their lot?

If their sufferings are only apparent, and not real (like the stability of our earth), or if each and all being questioned are perfectly satisfied with their lot, then the charge of cruelty against their Maker falls to the ground; and I venture to say here that our knowledge on these points is by no means complete. Whatever light may shine upon them hereafter, at present we have no means of proving that all suffering creatures are as sensitive to pain as ourselves. It is only a guess in the dark to say that—

> "A worm may feel a pang
> As great as when a giant dies."

Moreover, as to longings, desires and aspirations, we have no means of ascertaining their existence or their intensity. We have no right to project man's experience into our idea of the sensitiveness of the lower tribes of creation; and there may be degrees of desire and aspiration considerably below the point at which they become painful when not gratified.

But granting both of these conditions of pain to exist, it is still jumping at a conclusion to assert that they are fruitless in the case of animals and insects, and not fruitless in the case of man. I

cannot argue all the points at once; elsewhere I have shown that they are not fruitless in man; but assuming that in man, suffering is a needful discipline for the cultivation of a higher nature—and this is widely admitted by thoughtful persons—we have not the slightest proof that all the lower forms of sentient life are not the subjects of the same kind of discipline, and destined to reap the blessed fruits of their earthly suffering. The continuity of nature, the evolution of species, the very soul and spirit of development, all forbid the notion that one part of God's creation is under a different moral discipline to another—or that He would be more tender and considerate to a man than to a sparrow.

Here are three typical conditions. In a sick room lie two of my children, made ill by no fault of mine or theirs. It is an infliction of real pain on them and on me. On the lawn the cat is playing at ball with a redundant sparrow; getting amusement, apparently, out of the fluttering torment of the helpless bird. I go up to the rose-trees, and merely for the pleasure of having some good flowers to look at, I send into eternity whole families of the greenfly, without doubt not killing all instantaneously, but unavoidably inflicting apparent torture, at my will, upon hundreds of sentient beings.

Am I right, and is the cat wrong? Am I doing what is quite justifiable, and is the cat acting with brutal cruelty? And how about the sick children and their anxious parents? The sickness may turn, after slow torture, to death. Worse pang to me

than before. Is anyone more to blame in one case than in either of the others? Am I, and are my feelings as a parent, more to be respected than those of the sparrow or the aphis? I cannot draw the line; we are all wronged, or none of us are wronged. Every intelligent agent in this destruction, or this infliction of pain, is equally innocent or guilty. It is childish to think the aphis may be harmlessly killed or injured, because it is smaller than the sparrow, or the sparrow because it is not so big as a man. But this is precisely the kind of reasoning we often hear. People, very tender indeed about taking animal life, will be unscrupulous about mice and beetles, and will inhale or drink infusoria without scruple. Creation is one — though infinitely varied. We stand or fall for God's righteous dealing on a level with all sentient things. I would not claim an immortality based on God's partiality for me. I would not trust in a goodness which was not absolutely universal.

So having satisfied myself by varied experience that God's thoughts and ways to *me* are infinitely higher than my own, even while He is doing things, or permitting them to be done, which I do not like, and which cause me pain and anxiety, I conclude perforce that His thoughts and ways to every other living thing must be higher than mine, even when I am deploring the cruelty which I witness, or reflecting on the apparent cruelty which I am compelled to inflict.

To sum up this branch of the argument, we do

not know for certain what degree of pain really corresponds to the apparent suffering; we do not know whether the lower orders of creation have unsatisfied desires; and we do not know that this life is their all, or that one day every creature that God has made will not thank Him, as some of us can now thank Him, for every pain and sorrow.

And now arises another important consideration based upon analogy. Keeping in view the fact that while God's thoughts and ways are not ours, they are immeasurably higher and not lower, we make our own hearts, in their best and highest moods, the starting point from which to conceive of the Great Heart of God. As human beings full of tenderness, compassion, and fidelity, and especially as fathers and mothers full of parental love, we find ourselves compelled to inflict pain and sorrow on those whom we love, and only because we love them and desire their highest good. Our experience as parents teaches us the blessedness as well as the extreme need of some painful discipline. It is where love is highest and purest that we are fortified to crucify ourselves by punishing our children or denying their ardent wishes. When love is weak and carnal, then only do we injure our children by a criminal indulgence of their whims, or by neglect of discipline. But the distance between us and our babes is infinitesimal as compared with the distance between God and ourselves in our highest maturity. It becomes, therefore, an act of supreme reason—not to say of pure faith—to

admit that God sees the same necessity for th infliction of pain and the thwarting of our desires, as we see for these modes of discipline with our children. Are not our little ones fearfully perplexed by our severity? Do they see aught but wanton cruelty in some of our wisest and most loving frustrations of their will? It takes years to teach them how good it has been for them to "bear the yoke in their youth," to have been afflicted and mortified. But they do see it at last, provided it was done in fatherly and motherly love, and not in savage vindictiveness, or from wanton cruelty. And so, it seems to me, we may look up to the Heavenly Father, straining our tearful eyes to those supreme heights of incomprehensible goodness, and see in His thoughts and ways towards us and all His creatures the same thread of infinite and inexhaustible love binding us to Himself for ever, and consecrating every event of pleasure and of pain into a sacrament of Holy Communion. The man, the sparrow, and the aphis, when seen through this medium of a tender heart, are all alike believed to be the perpetual objects of God's far-seeing care and love.

While we cannot see this, we are but babes, and as babes we must still suffer, not merely the needful pains of our infancy, but the infinitely deeper sorrow of doubting our Father's love and good-will towards us. But we may be very sure that we shall outgrow our infancy, and among other childish things we shall put away the childish doubt of His goodness which may now darken our souls.

Those of us who have been blessed with wise and loving parents can bear testimony at least to the good-will which often inflicted upon them pain and disappointment. To do this is more than half-way towards trusting the Father in Heaven, even when His ways are most perplexing and inscrutable.

Let it be remembered that it has not yet been proved that a single pain or sorrow is fruitless. On that, of course, turns the whole question. If there be an end for good to all the world's pangs; if there will ever come a time, ever so remote, when each and all of God's creatures can thank Him for all that they are, and for all that they have been, then it is an act of common sense, as well as of the highest faith and filial love, to let God have His way with us and all things without murmuring, impatience or rebellion. Once assured of that final end, we may say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good."

But without this light shining out of our own loving and tender hearts from Heaven itself, I confess I see nothing to console us under our present distresses, nothing to hope for in the future. Without God, and without a perfect issue to all our pains, we are the sport of forces in nature, which are abysmally cruel. No words of indignation and fierce passion could express one's sense of the outrage daily and hourly inflicted on sensitive beings. The *Genus Felis*, down to the cat on the lawn, are angels of tenderness and love by the side of those myriad tormentors of soul and body, which have

been let loose upon our organisms, refined and made exquisitely susceptible on purpose to suffer torment. The talk about the preponderance of pleasure over pain is mere babble, insultingly irrelevant, when the moral aspect of the world's woes has to be considered. One poor insect tortured needlessly, and without hope of compensation, would be enough to damn the whole scheme as a moral failure. Hence it is, my friends, that my heart yearns to understand and explain what looks like a stain on the universe of God. On this ground, I beseech you once more to recognise the manifest imperfection of our knowledge of the past, of the present, and of the future, and to hold your judgment in suspense till the evidence is complete. Hence it is that I earnestly recall your minds to that little mirror of God's love which you carry about in your own hearts, and beseech you to give Him credit for being as good as you, if you cannot realise His goodness as far above out of your sight. The Hebrew prophets, encountering the same perplexing problems in the world as we encounter, were nevertheless "rich in faith, giving glory to God." And to us the same blessed answer may come as came to them in the day of their sorrow, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

(*See* APPENDIX.)

PART IV.

"*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*"
GENESIS xviii. 25.

IT is not generally observed that we use these words of confidence and trust in a sense very different from that in which they were first uttered. In view of the impending doom over Sodom and Gomorrah, the ancient story represents Abraham as pleading face to face with Jehovah to spare the cities of the plain for the sake of the few righteous souls which might be found therein. "That be far from Thee, Lord, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous be as the wicked, that be far from Thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" By these words the patriarch clearly meant to imply that Jehovah would not do right if he slew the righteous with the wicked, or made no difference in their outward lot. Now the feeling is entirely changed. No longer can men deny the fact that God does slay the righteous with the wicked, and that to an enormous extent there is little difference between their respective conditions—prosperity and adversity falling upon both classes in apparently blind caprice. But faith in a righteous Judge of all the earth rises like a Phœnix from its own ashes,

and repeats in louder and more triumphant strains "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

I have taken this ejaculation of Abraham as my text this morning, prefatory of a discourse on the destructive convulsions of Nature in general, and in special reference to the Cyclone in the Bay of Bengal on the night of the 31st October last.

Strange it seems that only last Sunday we were meditating on God's judgment of ourselves; and here we are to-day deliberately sitting in judgment upon Him. Let not, however, a timid or superstitious soul be shocked or terrified at this, as though it were blasphemy. Nothing but the deepest reverence and most loyal devotion inspires our thought. We would, if we could, try the ways of the Most High in the only scales of justice which he has put into our hands—not that we may declaim against the majesty of His good laws, but to seek and find the highest moral ground for justifying Him even when to our poor eyesight His dealings appear arbitrary, merciless and cruel, and "His ways past finding out."

Yet here, too, I must warn my sceptical friends not to think that I come to this solemn enquiry with a foregone conclusion. At this very moment, the rest of my sermon absolutely unwritten and unconceived, I do not know for certain at what conclusion I may arrive. Perchance my own faith may be itself shaken, and my moral sense forced to own that no vindication can be found for the actions about to be

tried. Perchance, also, it may prove that such a glimpse of the truth may be vouchsafed to us as shall leave our faith in a Righteous God stronger than ever. At all events, in the interests of truth and of the very honour of God himself, we will look at this subject with impartial eye.

We will enquire first, what has God done whereby He has laid the righteousness of His dealings under suspicion? I will endeavour to state the bare facts with as much brevity and with as little sensationalism as the theme admits of.

We will take the case of the Bengal Cyclone first, as it is the immediate cause of this enquiry.

At the mouth of the Ganges, where it unites with Brahmapootra, there is an estuary called the Meghna. Near the junction of this estuary with the sea lie several islands, three of which are large and numerously peopled, viz., Dakhin Shahabazpore, Hattiah, and Sundeep. The population of these islands was estimated at 340,000. The inhabitants were peasantry more than usually prosperous, having been attracted to the spot by the great fertility of the soil and its facilities for irrigation. Shortly before midnight on the 31st of October, the sudden cry was heard, "The waters! the waters!" Above the roar of the howling Cyclone the waves of the sea thundered, and roused the sleeping thousands to their doom. Some, more alive to the peril, ran for safety and climbed the trees; others more tardy sought refuge on the roofs of their houses, but

only to delay for a brief respite their certain destruction. On the waters rolled, crushing and drowning everything in their path, carrying with them men, women and little children, cattle and sheep; and as if not content with its rapacity, forced off the roofs to which the unhappy survivors had clung, and swept them all headlong into the seething sea. Morning broke at last, and disclosed a remnant—perhaps a third of the inhabitants—perched upon the trees, while below the drowning flood lay crushed and dead no less than 215,000 human beings, and an unreckoned number of domestic animals. In the presence of such an awful spectacle of lost life, it were bathos indeed to calculate the amount of lost property. These victims to the caprice of Nature we may be sure were no worse than the average of human beings, were, we know, industrious and thrifty, and doing righteous work in tilling the fertile land, and gaining bread for themselves and their families. There is no pretext, or shadow of a pretext, for their cruel fate. In no sense did they deserve the horrible catastrophe. No more than did those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, or those 345 persons who were burned alive or crushed to death in Brooklyn theatre not a fortnight ago. Some of them may have been, and probably were wicked, more wicked than the average, and less deserving of a life which they abused. Here, then, is a clear case made out that it is not far from God "to slay the righteous with the wicked;" it is, on the contrary, His rule and

constant method to make no kind of difference between them in dealing out destruction.

It was the fashion in olden time, among Jews no less than among Greeks and Pagans, to try to trace human calamities to Divine wrath. From the myth of the Noachian deluge—which, however, must have had a foundation in fact, so bitterly paralleled as it is by the Cyclone wave of Bengal—down to this very day God has been supposed by some to send these catastrophes in anger, as punishments and sore judgments against the sins of men. Herodotus tells us how some men thought the Gods were even jealous of great and prosperous men, and delighted to cut them down through sheer envy. All this, and similar outrageous theory of the motive at the back of these outbreaks of Nature, is now exploded; it is only in the pages of the *Record* and the *Rock*, and on the lips of some very feeble and puerile Clergymen that such a theory is ever heard; and then only because it is deemed an act of piety to echo what they believe to be the Divine explanation of this wholesale and ferocious slaughter. Whatever reason God may have for these catastrophes, we cannot hope to find it in the moral deserts of the victims. He *does* slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous be as outwardly prosperous—or the reverse—as the wicked is not far from Him, but the very rule of His dealings.

But the charge is not exhausted. The last Cyclone in Bengal was not the first. It is an old and repeated offence of Nature to raise almost without

warning an awful tempest of circling wind, which literally lashes the sea into towering heights, till the waves leap up on the treacherous shore and overwhelm the terrified and helpless inhabitants. In the *Times* of December 7th, there is a long black catalogue of similar convulsions, the records of which go back only as far as about a hundred years. Yet in this century alone, more than half a million of our fellow men have been swept away by Cyclones, within the comparatively small region of the coast-line of India. This is an area where the atmosphere is so conditioned as to be peculiarly liable to sudden variations of pressure. These variations are caused by violent changes in temperature forming a kind of central vacuum, into which pours the cooler atmosphere with terrific force, and not in straight lines, nor even in concentric circles, but in a spiral. The action of the air under this excitement, is to press unduly on the sea in the shape of a ring, and drive the enclosed waters upwards into the form of a mound; and when so raised the mound travels with the spiral wind till it dashes over a low-lying coast with what ruin and slaughter we unhappily know too well. This is the utmost that is yet known of the agency employed. But it is well to remember that it is not confined to India, but occurs everywhere within the tropics, and is familiar to travellers in the West Indies, South America, and even on the Northern shores of Australia. Just as the weight of a charge against a criminal is increased by proving previous convictions for the same kind of offence, so

the weight of this charge against Omnipotence is augmented by the multifold instances of similar injury. For my own part, I have long come to the conclusion that the thoughts of God about the value of human and other life, are very different indeed from our thoughts; and His ways most unlike our ways.

But to go on with the charge, air and water are by no means the sole agents in apparently merciless destruction of life.

Pope reminds us of other inexorable forces in Nature thus:—

> "When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease if thou go by?"

This question has been often terribly answered. For example, in 1806 the Rossberg mountain in Switzerland fell down from a height of 2,000 feet upon the valley below, utterly overwhelming the pretty village of Goldau, with about 800 inhabitants, who are said to have been distinguished for the purity of their manners, as well as for personal beauty, all of whom were buried alive beneath a mountainous mass of rocks and trees and earth, still standing a lasting witness of the catastrophe.

A similar fate befell the village of Piuro, near Chiavenna, in Italy, in 1602, by which 2,000 inhabitants were buried in their sleep. Nor far from my own dwelling in one of the mountains of Jamaica, there is a similar heap of ruins, which hides a negro village once buried beneath a landslip. Indeed, my

own house was in constant danger from the same cause, and of which we were one night reminded by the fall of hundreds of tons of rock, within a stone's throw of our very door. Is it needful to remind you of the earthquakes and volcanoes—of the burning flood that engulfed Pompeii and Herculaneum—or of the shock that carried Lisbon, with 200,000 inhabitants, to the bottom of the sea? More awful still, and to some minds more morally oppressive, are such disasters as the fire at Santiago, in Chili, in 1864, whereby a Church was destroyed containing 2,000 worshippers, in the very act of prayer and adoration, most of whom perished by suffocation, or were burned alive. Thus the very act of supplication is not heeded. Nature goes on with her butchery, or her fiery torture, while poor men and women are crying out, "Lord, have mercy upon us!"

These, and such-like fearful events are exceptions, some will say, to God's general rule, and so they are; but they accord only too well with the ordinary course of His providence in the perpetual birth, growth and death of all living things. If we arraign Him for killing a great number at a time, we must with equal moral logic arraign Him for killing anyone at all. If, however, no moral charge lies against Him for the ordinance of death, with what show of reason can we complain of His killing us wholesale, in large batches, and by sudden and unforeseen catastrophes? I have been told by those who ought to know, that when death threatens men in large companies, it is much less formidable

than when it comes to a solitary soul. Men in the hottest front of a battle, surrounded by carnage, yet still supported by companions in arms, scarcely fear death at all. Even ships that go down at sea through fire or storm, are scenes of this actual diminution of the terror of death. I can testify from personal experience that in a season of very great peril on the Atlantic, it was an absolute comfort and consolation to us to feel that if we perished we should all perish together. None would be left to mourn the others' loss. So, before admitting that killing in large numbers is any sign of cruelty, I must ask why should God be blamed for killing these people altogether, if you refuse to blame Him for killing them at all? I could run up a score of excellent reasons why it is, if anything, more merciful (to use a human figure of speech) to kill people in families and communities suddenly, than to kill them in the usual manner, one by one, by the slow torture of disease. If the earth is not over-populated, certain portions of it most certainly are, and India is a country pre-eminently benefited in past times by the ravages of war, famine, and pestilence, as well as by these recurring cyclones and floods.

But I need not pursue this argument. If I understand the charge against God aright, it is not pressed that these convulsions of Nature are calamities to the race as a whole, but only to the individuals concerned in them; that in fact God does work on the whole for the main good of mankind, but is absolutely indifferent to the interests or happiness of

each individual. If I go into danger after due warning, I cannot blame the earth, air, sea, fire, for the injury to which I have exposed myself. Nor would it be for the good of any individual that a miracle should be wrought to avert the threatened injury. For the threat itself is a safeguard. In being inexorable in the laws of Nature, God does show his care for the individual; for their only condition of safety lies in the fact that the law is inexorable. If I take up my abode at Sundeep, for example, after what has occurred, I can blame no one but myself if I am drowned in the next cyclone. If I choose to plant my vineyard on the slopes of Vesuvius, I have only myself to blame for being overwhelmed with burning lava. If I persist in building a fortress on the coral reef and sand called Port Royal, and which has more than once been flung into the harbour, can I with justice complain if the next bad earthquake should send me and my fortress to the bottom of the sea? God has enough to answer for without having to take care of the foolish, the obstinate, and the greedy, who will go anywhere and face any peril for gold. If the natural dangers of a place are well known, there is an end to the charge against God, when men seek those dangers in spite of warning, and take their air and exercise at the foot of a falling mountain, or on the edge of an icy precipice.

I have now to put the question, Is death an evil or a good? These, of course, are relative terms, and if death can only be shewn to be a necessary

evil, even then it must be admitted to be a relative good. My time is narrowing rapidly, therefore my words must be few. Imagine, if you can, that from this time forth God were to decree that there should be no more death upon the earth. That here we should continue to live without possibility of change or decay, our immortal and aspiring spirits ever tied down to the scenes and interests of this lower world, never to soar into those higher regions of knowledge and activity for which we feel sure that we have been born. Not a man or woman amongst us with good sense and feeling would hear the sentence of such a doom without despair. It would cut off at one blow that felicity which is acknowledged by all mankind to be the greatest upon the earth—the bliss of parentage. It would be impossible for us to increase and multiply without re-introducing disease and death. Little children there would be none. All would become men and women and remain so for ever and ever, with more than half the light and gladness of human bliss shut out. The present changes which, with all their sadness, help so much to sustain life and to improve human nature, would give place to a monotony under the pressure of which the brain would give way, and the world would quickly go mad. Is life a blessing? To what do we owe its possibility for ourselves? Surely to the ravages of death, which have made room for us. A perpetual stream of new individuals is being poured into the gaps which death has made; and so, however selfishly our ancestors might have clung to

life, they were forced to give way that we too might live and have in our turn a sweet taste of existence. But is this all? Can any one fairly reason on this subject while excluding the grand hope of immortality which has been a leading characteristic of the human race? Is it not permissible to us to add to the many good reasons for death and perpetual succession, the highly probable conjecture that death is but the entrance into a higher life, and that we only describe that last earthly crisis in literal exactness when we say that Death is God's messenger sent to call us to His home above?

I have ever acknowledged that the moral problems of this life are all but insoluble without this grand hypothesis; but when all the arguments on which it is received or rejected have been duly weighed, the preponderance is immensely in favour of its acceptance as a postulate, if not as an axiom. In view of this hope then, death ascends from the category of necessary evils and becomes a positive good. Good did I call it? It is heaven's richest, most bountiful boon to the weary sons of men. It is the fulfilment of a Divine promise given to us when God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life.

I will not deny that it often seems to us an evil, and seems to have come prematurely whenever it visits any but the decayed and the incurable. Yet how very often time subsequently reveals that the death we thought so premature, so utterly lamentable, has proved at last to have been the greatest blessing. Widows and orphans can rise by the

million and testify to the benefits which they have received in and through their most irreparable loss.

Far be it from me, however, to think that I have done justice in these few moments to so vast a theme; but I hope I have said enough to make us all see, if we needed conviction, that death is a blessing and not a curse; heaven's best boon, and not a necessary evil. And if this be admitted, together with the hints that I threw out respecting the compensations which invariably attend the death of large numbers at a time, we can only come to one conclusion on the solemn charge against God which we have been considering, viz., that the charge is *not proven.* That, though the facts are beyond dispute, there is not a tittle of evidence to prove any malicious, merciless, or cruel design, or any criminal carelessness on the part of the Great Destroyer. On the contrary, there is everything to prove that since death is a blessing to every individual as well as to the race, the slaughter of many thousands at one time by the periodic or exceptional convulsions of Nature, is a sign rather of beneficence than of malignity.

If we fail to see this, it is only because our instinctive love of life is so strong as to prevent our seeing that death is a blessing and not a curse; or because we have not faith enough to believe in a future life which God Himself is obliged to hide from us, lest a more perfect knowledge of it should completely overthrow His moral government in the present. If His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor

His ways our ways, it is only because they are infinitely higher, and better than we can possibly conceive.

"For though Thy wisdom takes away,
Shall I arraign Thy will?
No! let me bless Thy name and say
The Lord is gracious still."

PART V.

"*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*"

ISAIAH lv. 8—9.

IN my discourse last Sunday I believe it was made very clear that God's thoughts about human and other life must be very different from our own, but the mere statement of this obvious fact needs, I think, further explanation.

Before making any special application of my text, I wish to quote some remarks which I made upon it to my old parishioners of Healaugh just ten years ago, and which may be found on pp. 153-155 of the 3rd volume of *The Sling and the Stone*:—

"The value of the former of these two verses depends upon its connection with the latter. There are two opposite views of God, which are met and corrected by these two statements. It has been the universal custom amongst men to form their image of God out of their own consciousness. The gods whom men have worshipped have been for the most part exalted images of themselves—and according to the moral degradation or the moral elevation of different worshippers, the god whom

they worshipped has been either evil or good—has been base, sensual, and tyrannical, unjust, covetous, selfish, and revengeful, or has been noble, pure, kind, merciful, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity, self-sacrificing, and uniformly just.

"It is manifest that the words 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways,' is an answer from God to all those who thus form an image of God after their own likeness—though in very different degree, according to the moral standard of different men, *i.e.*, God's thoughts and ways must be much more unlike the thoughts and ways of some men than those of others.

"But there is another class of thinkers who are found alike amongst the professedly religious and the irreligious, who affirm that God's thoughts and ways are so totally different in kind from the thoughts and ways of men, that men can never gain any true knowledge of the Divine character and dealings; that we cannot possibly judge of the moral aspect of any of His dealings with men; that He is even capable of actions and decrees which in men we should call base and cruel, but which He has a right to do because He is God; that in fact we have no business to apply the words 'right' and 'wrong' to any of His supposed dealings, in the same sense as that in which we use those words in speaking of the dealings of men.

"Now I conceive that the second verse of my text is a special answer to these views of God, as the first verse was an answer to the other views.

If men are content to hold as final truth that conception of God's thoughts and ways, which is but a reflection or image of their own, then we may answer—God's thoughts and ways are not your thoughts and ways. If other men say, We cannot pretend to have any notion of what God's goodness, justice, and love may be, because they are totally unlike what we mean by these terms among men, then we may answer—Granted that our notion of God's thoughts and ways is very defective and poor, yet at all events His thoughts and ways are not lower and meaner than ours, but they infinitely surpass them in glory and excellence. 'As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.' And this is a tremendous gain. It gives us some ground to stand upon at all events. If our best and noblest images of God be but poor and wretched caricatures of His Divine beauty, yet still He is above not below them. He is more good than our highest thoughts of goodness can reach; more just in every way; more loving and lovable than the noblest image of God which the heart of man has created, or the highest example which has been permitted by God to walk this earth in order to reveal His love to man.

"If you take these two verses together, and remember that the first statement is only made as an introduction to the second, you will find how very true they are when tested by the facts of our history."

I would now invite you to apply this two-fold statement to the subject of death. I need not here recapitulate what I said last Sunday in evidence of God's thoughts and ways about death. The facts revealed by geology, and corroborated by experience, all go to prove that death has been a Divine institution from time immemorial, that nearly all things subsist by means of perpetual death, and that God appears to be not merely indifferent to the lives of His creatures, but to organise Nature so that none can possibly escape death.

On the other hand, man as a rule regards death with terror and abhorrence, as a penalty, as a curse, or at least as a calamitous interruption of the pleasures of existence. We may even go so far as to say that whenever the lower animals become sensible of mortal danger, they, too, shudder at it, and do all they can to escape from it. That they do not suffer as mankind suffers from fear of death, is due to the obvious fact that they very seldom anticipate it. It is man's high prerogative to suffer for his superior knowledge and his prescience. Sharing with all animate beings a love of life, that love is all the more ardent because he has so much more to enjoy; but not shielded as the lower animals are by a blissful ignorance, he is exposed to a keen sense of danger, which is a frequent cause of distressing apprehension. It is, therefore, natural to man to fear death, and to look upon it as an evil. Loving life and dreading death for himself, he came to frame the law "Thou shalt not kill," a

law kept to the very letter in the land of its birth, but in other lands and by other people confined only to human slaughter. The gentle sensitive Hindoo would not kill any animal for food; would not even destroy the vermin by which he himself was infested—so great was his veneration for animal life; while races less delicate, less sentimental, less morbid, slew their fellow-creatures for food, and thanked Heaven for sending them their prey. Yet even these drew the line at humanity. They would not kill their brother-man, except in warfare; for death was the worst of all evils. Human life was to be protected by the most stringent laws, and by the extremest penalty. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." This ancient prohibition, made in times comparatively dark and barbarous, has never been relaxed. As civilisation grew higher, as knowledge advanced, as religion itself developed, men set a higher and higher value on human life, and the tendency has ever been towards strengthening rather than relaxing the bonds by which it has been protected. In some countries capital punishment even for murder has been abolished. Physically we are no nearer to-day than in the ages of primæval man to the thoughts and ways of God respecting life and death. If anything we are further off. And we have not only no right to push this question from us, refusing to face it, but we are bound to ask and ask again till we have found a reasonable answer, "Why does God through our consciences, and

through universal civilised law, command us not to do that which He has ever done and is always doing Himself, and, to the unaided eye of mere spectators is doing with a recklessness and caprice utterly immoral?". I put this in all its boldness and hardness before you, because Religion itself has never suffered a fiercer or more dangerous assault than in the present age, in which this frightful anomaly has been so repeatedly urged in defence of Atheism.

Nothing less will satisfy us. Nothing ought to satisfy us but a perfectly moral justification of the Divine dealings. If His thoughts and ways must be admitted to be so different to ours, we cannot rest satisfied until we can perceive—however dimly—that the difference is only one of degree, and that His thoughts and ways must be higher than our ways.

Now, in the first place, let us see why man ought, within certain limits, to be afraid of death and to try to live as long as he can. A mere glance at life and its functions will settle that. Granting, of course, that God has a motive for everything done and that He rules the Universe, not only as a whole but in detail, we may say that every man has his place and a certain work to do during his life; at the very lowest estimate his existence must have an influence on the sum total of things, however small that influence may be. If a man had no instinct of self-preservation, no dread of death, his life might and would be prematurely cut off. Scarcely a child would ever gain maturity or even

reach to boyhood. Take away, then, this dread of death and you at once revolutionise the world in which we live. Whatever alternative might come, the world could not be the same as it is. Hence the instinctive love of life and dread of death (as an evil) are necessary to God's present order of this world. Therefore, moreover, it is necessary that men should not only shun death for themselves, but studiously refrain from killing each other. We do not know, nor can pretend for one moment to know, who is wanted here and who is not; how long this man shall live, or when that person ought to be removed. But it may be fairly presumed that God does know all this, which we cannot know. Therefore we very properly obey the law of self-preservation as long as we can, and likewise spare as long as we can the lives of our brethren. It is only in extreme cases that we ought to exercise or ever do exercise the divine prerogative of life and death. But we have already seen that God ordains death in spite of our instinctive aversion to it, and visits every one in turn, sometimes destroying the lives of thousands and hundreds of thousands at one blow. We confess that as God is the giver of life He has a *primâ facie* right to take it away. We men can never assume this right on the same ground. So God stands on a different footing to ours, and though on that ground He may not be wholly justified, yet *we*, at all events, are justifiably restrained from taking the life we did not confer.

Has God a right to take the life which He has

given? I answer "Yes" and "No." For it all depends on the different nature and aspirations of the different creatures on whom life has been bestowed; and to take it in one case might be morally blameless, while to take it in another case would be criminal. I would remind all my hearers that the logical position of Agnosticism gives us a twofold advantage. If we are not permitted to say "we know there is a future life," neither are they permitted to say "we know there is none." So, for aught we know, nothing whatever dies; that not a single creature to whom God has given life is ever deprived of it, and therefore that He is in very truth obedient after all to that law which men deem Divine, "Thou shalt not kill." It is a grand hypothesis which your Agnosticism cannot touch. Where there is total ignorance one surmise is logically as good as another; though surmises may certainly vary from the sublime to the ridiculous—this year of grace, 1876, bearing pregnant testimony thereto. The hypothesis most approaching to the ridiculous I need not designate or even indicate; the one most bordering on the sublime is that God has life in store for all who long for it, and perhaps for many more who dread its uncertainties, its perils and its responsibilities; that not merely men and women, but little children, infants of a span long, wake up out of the sleep of death to immortal felicity: that not only human souls, however young, but friendly creatures among the dumb animals who have felt and returned our

affection do not die eternally; that not only these but fierce wild beasts of the forest and birds of prey and all their victims will still live on, not as wild beasts or ravenous birds or trembling prey, but as gentler, nobler spirits: that not these only but all through the realm of animal and insect life down to the tiniest animalcule, every living thing has "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Some of the most beautiful characters that ever lived have held this faith. To me it is only a bright and fascinating dream. The utmost I can dare to say *I believe*, is that those who perish will be content to perish; and God will satisfy the desire of every living thing—that it is no more injustice to extinguish the life of any creature that is content thus to die than to deprive me of wings or render me incapable of living in the photosphere of the sun. If He gives all that each nature is fitted for, justice will be done, and God's goodness revealed. More than that I do not hope for, though God's fulfilment is grander than our brightest anticipations.

Then, it will be asked, If this hypothesis be true, why does not God reveal it? Think what years of miserable fear, and hours of intense mental agony men and women have endured because the canopy of heaven is never opened and no voice has ever reached us from beyond the grave! Even here, also, I believe God is more than justified. The pains men have suffered through uncertainty and suspense have been a trifle light as air compared

with the horrors we might suffer and inflict on each other if once the veil that hides the future were riven.

None, I presume, will deny the overwhelming advantage which we derive from having the future events *on earth* almost entirely concealed from us. In the chequered course of life we are ever being made glad with pleasant surprises, or made sad by unexpected calamity. To know beforehand all our joy would leave us without a vestige of appetite and destroy all the pleasures of hope. To know beforehand all our sorrows would extinguish all our present joy; the shadow of the coming gloom would darken the bright sunshine of present felicity. Nay, more, would it not so paralyse exertion and enterprise as to frustrate all the merciful designs of our discipline, and completely overturn the present order of things? Our ignorance of the future, our utter darkness as to our successes and failures, throws us back upon the hard but safe lines of duty. Not knowing what is before us we bend all our strength to do the right thing at the right moment, and leave the issue in the hands of the Righteous Arbiter of our destinies. It is by this uncertainty that we are governed and guided, and sometimes driven into the narrow path of duty from which the knowledge of what is to happen would perpetually allure us. It is not too much to say that what we thus gain by our ignorance of the future would be wholly lost if the future could be revealed to us.

But if this be true of the fore-knowledge of events in our earthly life, how much more true is it of the fore-knowledge of what may come beyond the tomb? We have already seen the ill effects which have followed even from an absorbing anticipation of a future life, how men and women have neglected and forgotten the pressing obligations of this life in order to intoxicate their souls by visions of bliss in the world to come. Ten thousand times worse evils would ensue were the vision to become an actual certainty, and were we permitted to open our eyes upon the scenes of glory and felicity which may await us. Distraction in its most vitiated degree would divert us from the tremendous responsibilities of life, and few indeed would be the heroes whose moral courage was great enough to keep them from rushing headlong into the world unseen. The earth would be soon depopulated by universal euthanasia. Moral culture would be no longer possible. For moral culture depends on the discharge of duty from disinterested motives, regardless of bribes and scornful of threats. Draw the veil which hides the unknown future, and men's eyes might be so dazzled with the spectacle as to become blind henceforth to all that constitutes real virtue—all this on the hypothesis of bliss in store. On the other hand, if that hypothesis be false, equally just and righteous is the Lord in hiding the certainty of annihilation from us, since the revelation of this horror would bear worse fruits still. Our perplexity in trying to reconcile the righteousness of

God with the present order of the world would be then aggravated beyond remedy, and the name of God would no longer be heard on the lips of men but in tones of futile and despairing blasphemy.

But what is perhaps nearest of all to the truth is, that whatever life there is beyond the grave is so different from our most subtle imagination of it, that God Himself could not reveal it to us. We have not capacities of mind to understand the probable reality, and therefore sooner than mislead us God wisely and mercifully puts the seal of eternal silence upon the mouth of futurity. In giving us the power to love and trust Him here, He gives us ground for hope that we shall love and trust Him for evermore. More than a hope He will not, He cannot, give; more than a hope, could it be given, would be our bane and not our bliss. Therefore in this, as in all His ways, He is higher than we, and His goodness far above out of our sight. He takes the dead—here and there a lonely flower, and places it tenderly in His bosom; now and again He comes like a reaper and garners whole fields of human grain into His heavenly barn. Can He speak more plainly than by this messenger of His —this Angel of Death—that He wants us elsewhere, and has found other and perhaps nobler work for us to do in His boundless realm? And shall not grateful, trustful, hopeful souls reply, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good?"

PART VI.

"*We know that all things work together for good.*"

ROMANS viii. 28.

I HAVE purposely cut off the words of the Apostle which follow, because it is impossible to take for my text any limitations to the ultimate triumph of good over evil, and it would be positively revolting to adopt the Calvinistic notions of predestination and election. If all things are working together for good only for those who love God, only for those who have been called or predestinated to an exceptional state of happiness, then we must at once surrender our belief in a perfectly just and loving God, and admit that He is unjust, capricious and cruel, without a single fatherly feeling towards the majority of men. If *all* men are not alike destined to attain goodness of character with all the blessedness which that state involves, then we can only say that it is a shame that any were born into a condition of sin and suffering to end life as it began.

In our present stage of mental and moral development, it is absolutely impossible for us to reconcile suffering, inflicted without a kind purpose, with the existence of a good God; and it is equally impossible to reconcile the final triumph of evil with the exist-

ence of a good God who is almighty. Our own hearts tell us that "all things are working together for good" to every human soul, or else there is no God so good as we conceive. If there is not, God must be either (1) able to do this but unwilling, or (2) willing but unable; or (3) neither able nor willing.

If He be able but unwilling—then He is not good. If He be willing but unable—then He is weaker than evil, and creation is a blunder which even human intelligence and human kindness would have guarded against. If He be neither able nor willing, then God is the direct opposite of our highest conceptions, and He sinks below the level of His own imperfect creatures—which is the same thing as saying that there is no God at all.

I have stated this in the plainest terms, that it may serve in the place of that demonstration which we cannot furnish respecting the existence and goodness of God, and the destiny of man. The dilemma is complete, and I should like to see the arguments overthrown if they can be overthrown, because they are all we have to trust to, the sole rational foundation of our belief, apart from that religious feeling and personal faith which are of no use to anyone but their owners. We want to believe only what is reasonable and true; if it be in anyone's power to show that this belief is false and unreasonable, we will give it up to-morrow, no matter how much personal comfort and hope it may cost us.

It is my object to show that what is commonly

called "sin" or "moral evil," is a necessary part of the Divine plan in bringing all men to a state of goodness and happiness; and, therefore, that it offers no valid objection to the reasonableness of our belief in God's goodness. But it is only fair to confess at the outset that everything depends on the hypothesis of ultimate good. It is still in anyone's power to say "Your theory is a very pretty one, and it would be delightful if it were true, but you have no proof whatever that there will be a future in which we shall work our way out through present evil into perfect goodness." I reply, No, I have no *proof* of it. At present, I confess, we have no direct evidence that the hypothesis is true. But in the absence of such proof we are wise in taking the balance of probabilities, and in trying to discover which is the more likely to be true out of contradictory alternatives.

We pursue this course in arguing with others, because, however firmly we may be ourselves persuaded of any given belief, we cannot prove anything by the mere fact of our believing it; we cannot transfer our own convictions at will. With all our hearts, we may believe in God the Father Almighty, and in the certainty of final good to all His creatures, but that goes for nothing with an unbeliever, and so it should. For do not we ourselves reject the firm convictions of other men? Do not we hear, quite unmoved, of fervent prayers offered to Jesus, or to his mother Mary, believing that neither Jesus nor Mary can

hear prayers any more than our own lately deceased relatives and friends can, and that even if they could hear them they are powerless to answer them? The convictions of other men go for nothing as arguments in proof that their belief is true. Hence it is, that we more properly resort to what I have called the balance of probabilities.

We have to ask which is the more likely—that there is a God or that there is not? That, granting His existence, is He more likely to have moral attributes or none? More likely to be at least as good and trustworthy as the best of men, or to fall below even the ordinary standard of human justice and kindness? From a view of His stupendous works, and His wisdom in their creation and guidance, is He more likely to be able or unable to work out the good which we hope for and which we reverently consider it to be His *duty* to secure for those whom He has called into being? If after due consideration of these and such like alternatives one concludes that there is no ground of hope for the triumph of Goodness, then there is nothing for one but to conclude also that God is not what we mean by the word "Good," and that it would be an awful aggravation of our misery to have to live for ever under His iron rule. Indeed, so foreign is such a notion to the human mind that when the conviction is once reached that God is not good, belief in God at all is also extinguished, and the idea of God is banished from the mind.

And this is the history of much that is called

Atheism. The eyes of some men's understanding and sense of right open and open until they perceive the repulsiveness and the falseness of the image of God presented to them by early education or surrounding creeds, and their aversion from the horrid picture is so intense that they can escape from the torment of beholding it only by denying the very existence of a God altogether. This shows, however, that they *have*, already interwoven in the very fibres of their nature, some idea of a supreme goodness which made them revolt from the caricature of Deity and abjure the very name by which it had been called. In the same way men have become avowedly atheistical because their conceptions of Godhead were so exalted. Anthropomorphism in any degree shocks their veneration and rouses their indignation; as they cannot know absolutely more of the Divine Being and mode of His existence than the believers around them can, they refuse to acknowledge a God at all, because they cannot form to their own minds an image of God worthy of that lofty ideal which remains yet undefined in the recesses of their hearts and imaginations.

Thus both classes of these professed atheists do, in fact, bear indirect testimony in favour of the hypothesis that God, if there be a God, must be good and great beyond all human speech and thought.

It is for the sake of these more especially that I am pursuing the present consideration of the objections drawn from sin and suffering, and my apparent

digression must be excused on the ground that as in the pulpit all argument is one-sided, it is only fair to make such admissions as one would be driven to make were the discussion carried on in ordinary conversation. This is why it has been deemed desirable to say at the outset, that the objections to the goodness of God which meet us in the *sins* of the world cannot be answered at all, except on the hypothesis that everything is working for the best, and must result in the final triumph of Good.

To put it more plainly still: Every man, woman, and child must some day be permanently the better and happier for every sorrow borne, for every sin committed.

I am here met by an objection which it is necessary to face at once. A thoughtful critic writes thus:—

"How can anyone be the better and happier, not only for every sorrow borne, but for every sin committed? It sounds paradoxical, and the objection which naturally occurs is, 'Then what is the use of effort?' And yet in a way one sees truth in it. It is pretty much the same, is it not? as saying with St. Augustine—'That of our vices we can frame a ladder, if we will but tread beneath our feet each deed of shame;' or, as Tennyson puts it, that

> 'Men may rise on stepping stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things.'

"Still, when temptation assails, the question is practical and important. Shall I be the better and happier eventually for yielding or resisting? If every sin committed helps one in the end to rise, why is it not better to sin? How would you answer it?"

My critic is fully justified in regarding my asser-

ion as a seeming paradox. A precisely similar logical objection was raised against St. Paul's teaching of the Gospel of Grace. When he said that "where sin abounded grace did much more abound," the Antinomians asked, "Shall we not sin that Grace may abound?" To this he replied by shewing that what was meant by "Grace" was in reality a death-blow to sin; that sin lost its power and its charm for those who were the subjects of Grace; and in saying this he spoke the truest and deepest philosophy, because the moral nature of man is, as a rule, strengthened and not weakened by encouragement and promise of victory. And I may claim for the theory of sin which I have hereafter to unfold quite as great if not a greater power of purifying the heart and making it more than ever averse from sin. We can repeat, with even more confidence than the Apostle, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," for you *are under the law* of a Holy God as well as the receivers of His grace. You are doomed to be holy, not unholy. You cannot escape the final destiny of moral purification. But when it is asked, What is the use of effort against sin, if every sin committed will bear good fruit? the best answer that can be made is, that there are degrees of goodness in fruit; and if a benefit be derivable from falling before temptation, a hundredfold greater benefit is derivable from resisting and overcoming it.

To yield to a temptation through its overwhelming force is sometimes the best, or the only, way of

learning its vileness and baseness; and the effort t resist it, even if not strong enough, is so much added to the moral strength of the soul. But there is all the difference between being overcome by a temptation and deliberately committing a sin in order to promote our ultimate good. The former is the inevitable result of a period of growth and transition. The latter is possible only to one who is morally insane—not one whit less absurd than for a man to go and contract a dangerous fever on purpose to improve his health. We are not likely, I think, to expose ourselves any more readily to voluntary pain, since we have learned to believe that it is a necessary and beneficial discipline for mankind. Neither are we likely to relax our moral energies when we come to learn how a condition of sinfulness is the "necessary postulate of all our virtue."

St. Augustine has beautifully expressed the sum and substance of our belief, but the theory leaves untouched the facts of human nature. The conscience in man will ever recoil from sin as the nerves will shrink from physical pain. As the one begets physical effort, so the other begets moral effort, and therefore when temptation assails, none but the moral idiot would willingly yield to it in the hope of improving his moral constitution. That many of us fall, and, alas! fall from lower to lower depths of iniquity, and some seem to settle down and become almost petrified into moral baseness, we must mournfully admit. But none do this on prin-

ciple. None have ever wilfully degraded themselves in the hope of thereby raising themselves to better things. Therefore the statement, "we must be some day the happier and better for every sin committed" should not be pressed to extravagant limits, nor charged with a meaning not sustained by the context. One can only say it when one has transported one's self into the remotest future and has taken, in imagination, such a retrospect of the grand and complicated past as is possible only to God. But, granting the premisses, this conclusion is inevitable. If God be all-good, all-wise, and all-able, all things must work together for good to every creature under His vast control.

If my assertion be true, it will be no waste of time to examine the facts about sin, its origin, its nature, and some of its manifest consequences; whereas if it be false, we may as well close the enquiry at the threshold; for if this life be the only one we can ever live, all our own highest rectitude can never justify the act of the Creator in having ordered the lives of some to be what they are from the cradle to the grave, but from a moral point of view we should have to regard in great measure the creation of mankind, to use the words of Professor Newman, as "a blunder infinite and inexcusable." The more loyal in that case men were to duty, the nobler their self-sacrifice for the well-being of their fellow-men, the more cruel would be their fate, the more wasteful would be their extinction by death. Weigh, then, the alternatives, and see if it be not

on the whole greatly more probable that all things are working together for good to all mankind, than that this life closes the scene of human thought and activity and aspiration. If this be granted we shall find, I expect, still greater encouragement for our hope in the manifest results of sin as it works under our very eyes.

We have now, however, to clear a little and to sharpen our thoughts as to what we are going to talk about.

This sin or moral evil—What is it? How is it caused? Why do we distinguish it from other pain? Let us take this last question first. There are things in the world which we love not only better than other things, but in a different way. It is more blessed to give than to receive. We are more glad, and in a different way glad, to have saved the life of a fellow-creature than to receive any amount of money. We rejoice more in the moral excellence of any one dear to us than we do in his inheriting a large fortune. So, likewise, there are some things in the world which give us not only more pain but a different kind of pain, than other things do. We are more wounded by the sense of having done an injury to our neighbour than by having had our own pocket picked. We would ten times—a hundred times—rather hear of an accident which had injured the body of one of our children than to hear that that child had committed some disgraceful crime, or had fallen into an immoral habit. We can bear to see them suffer in sickness

far more easily than we can bear to think of their lying or being mean or cowardly or cruel. Few men and women indeed could be found not to prefer to be the victim rather than the perpetrator of a guilty act.

Sin thus differs from physical suffering in being the occasion of deeper distress to the offender himself, and of greater shame and distress to others who may be interested in him. To analyse the difference between the two kinds of suffering is much more difficult—for how can we *describe* the difference between deep remorse and neuralgia? Both are acutely painful, but we are distinctly conscious of *a* difference between the sensations though we cannot say what the difference is. The neuralgia may even appear to be the more violent and to convulse the frame with agony, while the remorse hardly disturbs the outside physical serenity, or becomes visible at all to an observer. But no one doubts which is the worse to bear, no one would hesitate in the choice between them.

On this ground then, if on no other, it is neces sary to consider the subject of moral evil apart from pain, although, as we are well aware, an immense amount of physical suffering is due to moral evil, and moral evil itself is sometimes the direct fruit of physical pain.

In replying to the question "What is moral evil?" we shall do well to avoid the controversies between the Intuitional and the Utilitarian Schools, not because we do not recognise their great importance,

but because these controversies do not immediately bear upon the subject before us. What we have to do is simply to get a clear notion of what sin is; and in order to do this we must avoid using abstract terms. Just as there can be no suffering without a sufferer, there can be no sin without a sinner. To produce any sinful act there must be at least two factors—an impulse to commit the act and a sense of obligation not to commit it. A man must not only know that the act is wrong, but that he ought not to do it, and he must feel that he could help doing it if he tried. Where there is no such sense of obligation there can be no sin. But whenever that sense is violated then the action is sinful. We cannot justly blame a man for any action, however disastrous in its results, if he did it in perfect ignorance of what he was doing, or under such circumstances as deprived him of sufficient self-control. We may take him and punish him or put him to death for the future safety of society, but do what we will we cannot make him guilty if he does not feel guilty. *We* cannot by our after verdicts and penalties make any action sinful which was not done by the perpetrator in violation of his own moral sense. Unless a man knows he is doing wrong and believes himself to be able to refrain from doing it, he cannot feel guilty of sin; and all our efforts to shew him the enormity of his offence will be thrown away. For mere sorrow at the consequences of our conduct is not necessarily remorse or a sense of guilt. If I tread on a particular stone

in the street quite unconscious of there being anything unusual in the pavement, and I am afterwards told that my stepping there caused some heavy piece of iron to fall on the head of a person in a cellar beneath and caused his death, I should be made very unhappy, but not in the least degree should I blame myself for the mischance. No amount of pity or sympathy for the victim of the accident would ever make me feel in the smallest degree *guilty*. But if, on the other hand, I had done some irreparable injury through malice or even through culpable negligence, an injury which was never traced to my conduct, which never cost me the smile of a friend or the slightest social obloquy, yet I should bear in my breast a sense of guilt and shame which would embitter all my days.

This wide subject of guilt is coming rapidly into public discussion. The mournful events brought out in our Criminal Courts ever give a fresh impetus to our interest in the relation between crime and insanity; and although for a long time to come, we may be compelled to continue the clumsy expedients to which we now resort for the punishment or discouragement of crime, we shall gradually revolutionise our treatment of criminals by first learning more about the real constituents of crime itself. Sin must be wilful and *preventible too* on the part of the sinner to be sin at all; whatever does not fulfil these conditions is neither moral nor immoral. If an idiot steals, or a maniac commits murder, no one dreams of calling the poor wretch

guilty, because the idiocy or the madness, if manifested in other ways to a degree strong enough to be recognised, is a guarantee that the act was not done under the conditions necessary to produce guilt.

But I need say no more to bring clearly before our minds that by common consent of mankind we never impute guilt to the man who has done wrong either in sheer ignorance, or when he could not help it.

The only moral evil, then, which we have to consider, consists in those acts which were wilful and preventible by the sinner himself. And under the term *acts*, we must include, not merely actions visible to men, or concealed from them, but words spoken which we know to be wrong or false, and even thoughts which we feel to be sinful, and from which really spring all sinful action. For a thought wilfully cherished is as much an act of the human will as a word wilfully spoken, or a deed wilfully done.

Next Sunday morning, I shall endeavour to prove that the moral sense in man, which in its earliest action almost, if not quite, invariably produces sin, is the greatest conceivable blessing granted to mankind, and the strongest evidence which we possess short of demonstration of the existence and goodness of God. If I can show that there is no moral evil at all without the moral sense, and that what we rightly call "sin" would never have been perceived to be sin, would never have roused the least opposition or a single effort at self control, unless we had

a moral sense; if I can further prove that the struggle between natural impulse and the moral sense has resulted already in a glorious elevation of our race out of the mire of barbarism, and that as we reach one range of summits, heights of virtue more grand and lofty keep rising before us; if I can prove that the hindrances in our pathway are but stimulants to our moral life and strength; that even our falls beget greater carefulness and stability in our march;—then, I think, this will go far to justify the ways of God to man, to help us to discern His greater wisdom and love in the discipline to which He has submitted us, and to foster our burning hope that, this life ended, we shall renew our upward course, and climb with ever-increasing freshness and vigour the bright mountain of holiness in the life to come.

But one fruit of our labour will surely reward us; we shall be able to rend in pieces the old legend which tells of a defeated and angry God, of a God who, having made a perfect human being, suffered him to be hopelessly wrecked upon his first voyage across the sea of human responsibility, and then cursed him for his misfortune. We shall no longer regard sin as an interference with the Divine plans, or even as a temporary thwarting of Divine purposes. We shall no longer associate our own sense of guilt with a disturbance of the Divine mind or the excitement of Divine wrath. We shall cease to dread unseen powers of evil which scared our childish imaginations, and come to look for our

worst moral foes within the circle of our own ignorance and of our feeble moral energy. We shall no longer avoid wrong-doing for fear of torture, or follow what is right through hope of reward. We shall learn to love duty because it brings to other men welfare and joy, and to cultivate every noble virtue that we become all that *He* wishes us to be who is our everlasting Friend.

PART VII.

"*God is the Lord who hath shewed us light.*"

PSALM cxviii. 27.

BY far the sorest and most perplexing problem which has vexed the souls of the devout in all ages, is the existence of moral evil in a world believed to be created and over-ruled by a Holy God.

That a Perfect Being should allow imperfection in any of His works seems at first sight an impossibility. It is only after long and careful meditation that we come to learn that any other condition is impossible. There can only be but one absolutely Perfect Being. Every being created or subordinate to Him must of necessity be inferior to Him, or imperfect.

Still it is necessary to remember that the idea expressed by the term "perfection" varies with the subjects of which it may be predicated. If we compare an infant with a fully-developed man, we at once see that it is not perfect, but full of imperfections, deficiencies, and weaknesses from which the perfected man will be free. But if we compare the infant with what an infant ought to be at that

particular point in its development, we may with truth declare it to be perfect. Perfection is a term, then, used sometimes relatively, sometimes absolutely. Relatively in reference to all things created, absolutely only in reference to God.

If the maker of anything sees that at any given moment the creature corresponds exactly with what he then and there intended it to be, it is then and there relatively perfect, perfect in having fulfilled the creator's purposes thus far. And from this point of view the embryo may be as perfect as the full-grown man, and the man, mortal, sinful and ignorant though he be, yet perfect in having reached the highest development possible to him in his present conditions.

I have stated this at the outset of our meditations this morning that we may the more easily surmise that even a perfect God does not look with displeasure or regret at the present morally imperfect condition of our race—and cannot regard with dismay, as we often do, those aberrations from rectitude which form by far the deepest and most poignant of man's woes. On the hypothesis of a future life, but on that only, we may think of the Creator as looking down this day upon our sorrowful and sinful world and pronouncing it to be "very good."

The first and most obvious reason for the presence of sin in the world is its absolute necessity for the generation of virtue. Mere sinlessness is not virtue; virtue consists not merely in right conduct, but in

right conduct achieved through a struggle with temptation. To make any action truly virtuous it must be possible to refrain from doing it, and we must have a desire more or less strong to evade the doing of it. We must have, in short, sinful tendencies in order to become virtuous at all.

A thief incarcerated has no virtue in not stealing while he is in prison. It is only when he emerges from constraint and is once more free to steal and wishes to steal that he can be virtuous in not stealing. There is no virtue in being honest and sober, when honesty and sobriety have been the habits of life from earliest childhood, and when no temptation to be dishonest or drunken has ever been felt. It is surely a waste of time to enlarge upon such a patent fact as this. And though I will not dwell upon it longer, it must be noted and carefully remembered as the cardinal answer to the question "Why should there be moral evil at all?" Without moral evil, without sinful tendencies, without strong desire to do wrong, there could be no *virtue*. The means whereby sin could have been kept out of the world would have shut out also all possibility of virtue. When once this fact is recognised and grasped, the whole moral aspect of the condition of man is changed, and it is enough by itself to vindicate the goodness of God in allowing moral evil to enter His world.

But we proceed. Not only is a sinful condition necessary to produce virtue at all; but the highest, *noblest virtues* of all are the fruits solely of a sinful

state. There are, as we know, degrees in virtue, some forming as it were the roots, some the trunk and branches, and some the flowers and clusters of moral excellence. *E.g.* honesty, truthfulness and temperance we rightly regard as the roots of all virtuous life; they are primary essentials of character among civilised men, and without them society could not exist. Respect for human life is another of these typical and fundamental virtues. But there are other and more rare excellences of human character which are the direct fruit of contact with evil in others. Patience, long suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, rendering good for evil, and, best of all, that love which covereth a multitude of sins, melts the stony heart, and redeems the outcast sinner by the mighty hand of pity and sympathy and tenderness—all these, the fairest flowers of humanity, would be unknown and impossible in a world from which sin had been shut out. The fabled heaven of angels and archangels, if not peopled by spirits who have undergone a discipline of sin and sorrow like our own, must be infinitely inferior in nobility and in virtue to those saints on earth who know how to forgive sins, to give blessing for cursing, and to overcome evil with good.

If once you see this, you literally dare not for very shame complain that you live in a sinful world. To open your lips in reproach against the world's order is only to proclaim that you either undervalue or despise man's noblest possibilities. Unless you are prepared *to deny* that the highest virtue is the

highest good, you cannot consistently rail at that condition of things in which alone the highest virtue is possible.

I will not linger over these obvious facts, but pass on at once to consider what share God has had in bringing about this sinful condition.

If the foregoing arguments be admitted, then we ought to admit also that He was justified in using almost any means to bring about the desired end. But inasmuch as the means adopted are grounds of complaint also, as men still cry reproachfully—"Why did He not make us perfect without all these vile antecedents?" it becomes our duty to enquire into the means adopted whereby men became sinful.

Let us ask first, What was man's original state? Was it one of moral perfection, and did he fall therefrom? I answer: Falling from a state of moral perfection is a contradiction in terms. The possibility of falling involves moral imperfection.

2. Was man's original state one of utter moral baseness? To attempt to answer this seems like entering upon illegitimate speculation. Nevertheless, I will state the answer and give my reasons for it. Man's original state was not one of utter moral baseness. Because it is conformable to all analogy that the human race has passed through stages of condition very similar to those of the individual man. Under our very eyes we see infants born and watch them growing into childhood, and we never discover in them during those tender years anything

to warrant us in calling them morally debased. It has become a proverb with us to say, "as innocent as a new born babe." There is every reason to believe that the first human baby differed not at all *morally* from the last human baby born while we are yet speaking.

It would be a pure and gratuitous assumption to suppose that the first human beings were any more morally debased than the infants of to-day. And, therefore, if the first human beings instead of developing into what we call "moral beings" simply retained morally the condition of infancy in which they were born, and consequently followed their animal instincts and gratified without restraint their natural appetites, they could not even then be said to be morally debased. So that man's original state was one neither of moral perfection, nor of moral debasement.

3. Was not the original state of man a state o absolute *un*morality? I have been obliged to coin this word because no other so well expresses the actual condition I wish to describe. Though men now are moral beings, yet our infants are neither moral nor immoral. As they grow up they become moral or immoral. If through congenital defect they are idiotic, they never in this life become moral at all, nor immoral; but remain unmoral. During a period of infancy, varying as to its length, man is neither moral nor immoral but only unmoral, has not yet been "born again" (so to speak), into the higher human or moral world. I will not dogmatise

where I do not know, but there seems to be every probability that the progenitor of the human race or—to speak with greater scientific exactness—the progenitors of the human races remained for a considerable time in this unmoral condition; however by comparison with us degraded and inferior, they were nevertheless free alike from guilt and from virtue, unconscious of moral distinctions and having no more moral responsibility than an infant or a stone.

By-and-by a change comes over the scene, and man becomes a moral being, feels that there is a difference between right and wrong, that there are some things which he ought to do, and some things which he ought not to do; and from that moment sin enters into the world. That crisis of human development, whether of the race or the individual, is the beginning of moral evil.

Now let us see what God has to do with this.

In the first place, we say it with reverence, He alone is ultimately responsible for the whole development of man as of everything else within His realm. And we need not mind owning it in this case, because what He has done or caused to be done was the greatest boon ever granted to mankind. I will not hamper my argument by any discussion as to how the moral sense arose in man in the first instance. That matters absolutely nothing, for all admit that it arose by the action of the inherent natural functions of *human* nature—as distinct from other animal nature. And for these causal functions God is primarily responsible. So

it comes to the same thing precisely whether the process required ages of growth and thousands of various converging forces, or was done in a moment by the breath of God. What took place at all is what was done by Him, and all we want to know is what He did that has made men sinful.

And, blessed be His Holy Name! all that was ever done to make men sinful was to give them a moral sense, to implant within their breasts a conscience, to give them power to feel and to say "I ought," and "I ought not." He has taken nothing from us that was good, He has given nothing to us that is evil. He has only poured the light into our darkness and opened our eyes to perceive differences where none were even thought of before, and brought us out of the wilderness of our animal freedom into the fold where He would train, and shelter, and control, and correct us for a life that is more worthy of men.

Without the moral sense you have, it is true, a state of sinlessness, but it is a state of disorder and untamed animal indulgence, unspeakably lower than even a low state of civilisation. There is no moral evil, it is true, but neither is there any virtue or longing for virtue, nor any restraint which men, as men, deem noble and manly.

The outcry against moral evil is at the same time the highest tribute to the bounty and goodness of God. The louder we rail at it, if so be we are fighting against it as well as railing, the greater proof of our eternal indebtedness to Him who has

made us aware of its presence and made our inmost souls revolt from its touch. God has not altered any of the constituents of human nature—all remain as they were—but He has given us the power to discern the use and abuse of every faculty, and has impressed upon us the inexorable obligation to put everything to its proper use. We are no longer merely and only animals. We have perhaps lost considerable enjoyment by the change. Not so, however; we must not go too fast. In a purely unmoral state only the strongest and most brutal would have kept the enjoyments for themselves, and that at the expense of the weak and gentle. Only some—very few—have lost some physical enjoyment by the addition to our nature of the moral sense. But nevertheless what do we learn from all human life and history? That though much happiness has been conferred and provided for, yet mere happiness was not and is not the chief end of life: the Ruler of it all has told us as plainly as words can speak how much more He seeks our moral progress than our physical ease, and how good it is for man to be afflicted. So if we have lost anything by the addition of the moral sense, we have gained something unspeakably more precious—the Divine rapture of being able to confer happiness, to become good, and to promote goodness. This, man's highest known felicity, is due to the moral sense, has come in by the same door which flooded the world with moral evil; is the fruit of that conscience which is now making men

saints whom at first it made sinners. God has made no evil, and done no wrong. He has but taught us to call things by their right names, to appreciate distinctions where we once thought there were none, and to throb with high and holy aspiration after a virtuous life, the very existence of which had never dawned upon our imagination.

It has been the cardinal error of orthodoxy to assume the inherent vileness and baseness of man's natural propensities. No mistake was ever so glaring. There is nothing intrinsically evil in our nature. Whatever evil there be lies wholly in the irregular and unlawful exercise of our propensities; and by the terms "irregular and unlawful" I mean that exercise which is forbidden by the moral sense. In that alone lies the sin of man. The moral sense is a new function for the control and regulation of the whole nature. This alone makes man a sinner, and this alone can make him a saint. To call this the "Fall of man" is a gratuitous blunder. It is obviously a rise from a lower to a higher stage of being. To be a man, though a guilty one, is better than to be a stock or a stone. To discern between good and evil, even before the moral strength is equal to the choice, is higher than a condition of total moral blindness.

It is true, and it must be admitted, that moral evil preponderates at present over goodness. But what is that but to admit also that we are in the earliest stage of our moral life? We are but children learning to walk, and weakness and failure

must precede strength and success. If our hearts are heavy under the clouds of to-day, let us only contemplate the triumphant march of mankind from the birth-day of our race, through the cycles of ages until now. To the mingled discipline of pain and sin we owe every conquest of ourselves, every achievement of human industry and skill, every privilege of advancing civilisation. When the light of the moral sense first dawned on the heart of man, we may be sure it was faint, feeble and flickering. Ages and ages were past before the simplest elements of social morality could be established—never again to be overthrown. Little by little individual character improved. Step by step men marched on their upward way, often, too often, lingering for slumber on the road, or making devious wanderings into the thickets on either hand. There must have been an hour in the world's history when only one or two felt it wrong to lie, and made themselves the laughing-stock of their generation by their "absurd eccentricity." But ages passed away and the words of the few wiser and higher souls entered the hearts of ever more and more in succeeding generations, till truth-speaking became recognised as the universal obligation, though it was not the universal practice. The same with all the other ordinary virtues; and when these were attained, the best among men, opening their hearts to receive more light, saw higher and higher summits of excellence still to be reached. Then followed sympathy and tenderness, benevolence to all, ex-

tending even to the brute creation, kindness to the foe as well as to the friend, forgiveness of injuries, and love for the undeserving. Our very words prove the distance we have travelled. When our word virtue [*virtus*] was first spoken by Roman lips to Roman ears, it signified nought but manly strength and courage, because the highest ideal of manliness was then only what we now call brute force, and bravery in war. Now our idea of manliness is so inconceivably higher that we no longer call physical strength a virtue, nor regard physical courage in war as anything more than a valuable quality—not of the highest order. Moral courage we set far above it. In like manner among the Greeks, the words they had in use to express degrees of excellence of character were, many of them, derived from words signifying physical strength, and from the names of weapons handled in war. The standard of virtue is ever rising, and with every fresh beam of moral light men are not only aroused to renewed activity, but are pierced and pained by the stings of shame and self-reproach. We do not—I might almost say we cannot—take a single step on this ladder, by which we climb from earth to heaven, from ourselves to God, until we first feel guilty for not having taken it before.

As a mere spectator of the world's sin, I dare not complain of the means which have been devised to accomplish our high destiny. Whether God could have done it otherwise or not, is a question wholly irrelevant if the actual benefits of the present order

be recognised. Enough is already manifest to justify amply the wisdom and beneficence of His most righteous rule over men.

But, as a believer in God, as one who humbly hopes that his ideal of God is at least as high as was ever cherished in the human breast, I cannot but discern in this our discipline of pain and sin a far-seeing wisdom and love infinitely grander than our own.

I cannot refrain from quoting here a portion of a letter written to me in 1860 by a deceased brother of mine, who was also a clergyman:—

"Why was it that evil was permitted to come into the world? I have never met with what I believe to be a true solution of it. I don't believe it is possible for any mind or soul of man either to arrive at any such solution for itself, or see it when found, which has not first escaped *thoroughly, thoroughly*, from every vestige of the old yoke of 'God in Christ,' Hell, Atonement. The explanation lies in half a dozen words; that the highest manifestation of any nature can only take place, *i.e.* its highest qualities can only be in exercise and the depth of its resources and the sufficiency of its strength only fully called out, in dealing with what is antagonistic to itself. Any nature less or meaner than Divine would have left evil and antagonism out of his Creation—as a parent would keep it out of his nursery, or a master from his school, and would have revelled in the contemplation of scenes of happiness and order. But the higher nature lets in the evil, the disorder, the trouble, knowing the inexhaustible and matchless force of its resources to deal with it and subdue it."

We should have recoiled in fear and horror from the gigantic labour and from the terrible risks of

evolving man, of raising one portion of the animal world into the condition of moral beings, of deliberately waiting thousands and tens of thousands of years for the germ of holiness and sainthood to grow from within the soul of man and spread itself by slow degrees over the whole race. We could never have faced the difficulties or endured the agonizing spectacle of the perpetual mistakes, defeats, falls and futile efforts, which have blotted over the pages of human history, nor could we have had faith or patience or love strong enough and deep enough to sit still and listen to the shrieks and yells and blasphemies which have pierced the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Only a Divine eye that could see the end, could look complacently on the world in its progress. Only a Divine confidence in matchless wisdom and in enduring might could have faced the possibilities of such an awful failure. Only a Divine love, willing to bear the strain of inflicting pain for the sake of its children could have had the fortitude to carry on the discipline to its bitter end.

More than ever do I now see why the most pious in all ages have called Him "Father" who rules the world. By pain and sin, especially by sin, He brings us nearer to Himself, teaches us to whom we must be loyal, and whose will it is that we should lead lives of brotherly love, leads us to look up to Himself for strength amidst temptations, for patience under all trials, and for our final resting place in His bosom.

Unhappy man may go on telling us that there is no Father above, or there would be neither pain nor sin in this orphaned world of ours. We, however, must make answer to them, that our sorrows and sins have been our only avenue to our Father's home; and that but for these sore afflictions our hearts would never have sought, would never have found, Him.

PART VIII.

"*I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*"

PSALM xxxii. 5.

THE foregoing steps we have taken in the inquiry as to the origin and nature of moral evil, land us at the threshold of a perfect museum of kindred questions, which offer perplexities apparently quite as difficult of solution. We are confronted with the ideas of guilt, punishment, endless hell, atonement, sacramentalism, all of which have grown up out of the radical conception of man as a moral being. I will not undertake to pursue all these ramifications, but will for the present consider the question of guilt and what it really implies, also endeavouring as we go to release it from those artificial ideas of punishment and atonement which have been mixed up with it.

It has been taught by some theologians, that the sense of sin is the basis or ground of all Religion; but those who have taught this have, for the most part, taught likewise, that guilt involves fear or dread of God's anger, that sin deserves an infinite penalty which man can never pay but by an eternity of suffering, and that the only way of escape from that endless woe is by the claims of God being

satisfied by the sufferings of an infinite being on man's behalf. This, of course, is the ordinary Christian idea, and it is so far true to say that the sense of sin is the root of all religion. The same teachers point triumphantly in proof of their assertion to many other religions of the world which start likewise from a sense of guilt, a sense of danger, and a scheme of salvation from Divine vengeance. Nor can we deny that through a large portion of humanity this order of religious ideas has been followed. Nevertheless, I think we shall be able to show that the connection between a sense of guilt and a sense of danger, etc., etc., is only arbitrary, and not fundamentally necessary; that the whole course of human thought on this matter has been "childish" and erroneous, and that with higher views of God and of human nature and destiny, we shall be able to put away these childish things and bring to bear upon these great questions the understanding and reasoning of men.

In one sense I would not mind admitting that the sense of guilt is the root of all religion, inasmuch as it brings the soul to the bar of God, and forces upon our conviction the reality of a Divine Lawgiver and Judge. Whether our sin be detected or not by man, the instinct of our souls is to cry out:—"Against Thee, O Lord, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." Explain its origin how you may, the conscience at its highest development testifies to these facts: That there is a moral Ruler in the universe, and that by sin we have acted somehow against

His will. In spite of all our theories we feel thrown out of harmony with the Divine order, and are convinced that whenever we act sinfully we shall not be at peace with ourselves or with God. Philosophers may try to explain this by saying that our mental disturbance under a sense of guilt is due to the discrepancy between our actual and our ideal, and that is all; but even were it all, these are only new names for the same things. Our "ideal" is with many men a synonym for God; and for those who, thinking to ignore God, cherish an ideal humanity to which they ought to conform, the term stands in place of a deity. This, after all, is no disproof of the believer's conviction, for he goes all the way with the unbeliever in feeling, when under a sense of guilt, that he has fallen short of his own ideal of what he ought to have been—he only goes a step further and feels that whenever he thus falls short of his ideal, he is (in human language) displeasing his Maker; whenever he sins he not merely ceases to be at peace with himself, but ceases to be at peace with his God.

Now it is, I know, extremely common for the sense of sin to be accompanied by a conviction that sin deserves punishment, either by the infliction of pain or withdrawal of pleasure. The association between these ideas is due to the prevailing necessity for the discouragement of crime by punishing criminals. It is created and fostered from our very infancy by the inevitable discipline of the nursery and the school. Every violation of a household or academical rule is

followed by the infliction of some penalty in order to deter—*i.e.*, to frighten away—the culprit from a repetition of the offence. This discipline is acquiesced in because it is found to be generally effective in the correction of manners and in the cultivation of certain good habits. We cannot now discuss the wisdom of it as a means to an end. But we may point to the fact that this discipline is confined to the period of childhood and boyhood, after which it becomes less and less necessary. If, however, through the absence of previous education, or through the persistent virulence of a vicious nature, the boy grows up to break the laws of society as he used to break the laws of his home or his school, then the old method of restraint and penalty are resorted to as punishments for his crime, as well as deterrents to frighten away others from following his wicked example. Wherever we turn we see punishment connected with offences between man and man, and as these are for the most part regulated by law, we have come to regard this connection as inherently just—which it may be—I am not disputing that, but I am endeavouring to show how natural it is to associate a sense of guilt with the sense of deserving a penalty which is demanded by justice. And in reference to the wrongs done by us to others, I do not see why this should not continue. If we do any man an injury we feel that we deserve to suffer for it, and we are bound to make a perfect restitution if we can.

But our sense of guilt in the sight of God is a totally different thing, and I believe it can be shown to be

not necessarily associated with a sense of deserving punishment at His hands.

I first of all lay down the general principle that we can commit no sin whatever against God which is not directly or indirectly sin against man. Direct injuries need no comment. It is of the more subtle sins against ourselves that explanation is needed to bring them under the category of sins against man. Although we cannot see the ramifications of the past, present and future, we can readily imagine that they are all naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and to Him must be perfectly manifest what we only surmise, viz., that everything and every event in the world has some effect on everything else. Just as we are taught by astronomers to understand that the motions of our solar system are being more or less influenced by stars so distant as to be absolutely invisible to us; so we are being taught by our leaders in science and philosophy that ages most remote are still manifesting their influence upon our own; that we can do nothing without influencing for good or for evil our far-off posterity; and that the future denizens of this earth depend in great measure upon what we are and on what we do. If a man then fails in his duty to himself, so as to do himself any physical injury, that failure will turn up again somewhere else, however remote, and bear witness against him. If he fails to fulfil the obligations of his moral sense, moral evil will ensue to others in ever wider and wider circles till its force be neutralised by other activities. If a man then feels

guilty before God for any, the most secret, sin of his life or heart or mind, he is at the same time a sinner against mankind, and as such he must feel that he deserves punishment and must make reparation to the best of his power. But as a sinner against God the whole case is different; a pure sense of guilt need not have in it a single taint of the fear of penal consequences. Nay, the man who is truly and purely conscious of sin against God is not concerned at all about what may befall him as punishment. It is the sin itself which distresses him and fills his spiritual vision to the exclusion of all other objects. If the thought of penal suffering should obtrude itself for a moment, it is passed over as a very light thing compared with the misery of having had his peace with God disturbed and broken. If he feels how much he has forfeited, how little he deserves of the Divine favour or pity or mercy, he knows well enough that God is infinitely too great to be angry with him, or to alter His blessed decrees of bountiful compassion because he has failed to do his duty. The more perfect is the sinner's faith in Divine fidelity, and the more he hopes for the continuance of Divine guidance and succour; the deeper is his contrition, the more sincere is his repentance. He does not dream of pleading for forgiveness, for the suspension of Divine wrath, for the extension of Divine mercy; but all he feels is that he cannot forgive himself. Nothing will put him right but reformation. Nothing will restore his peace but the victory so full over temptation that he is not likely to sin in like manner again.

The sense of sin against God, if only left to its natural course, can only take one form of fervent desire —the longing to be set free from that sin; the earnest prayer to be able to do His will. So far as punishment has anything to do with it, it is rather courted than deprecated. Any discipline, however painful, would be welcome that should purify his soul. And of this highest type of contrition we find the noblest instances among the Hebrew Psalmists, who prayed "O Lord, correct me with Thy judgment" — "Judge me, O Lord, according to Thy righteousness." They sang again and again of the blessedness of the whole earth when God should come "to judge the world with righteousness and the people with His truth." The guilty need not run away and hide themselves from the Most Holy. They have nothing to fear from Him. Everything to fear from their own weakness or from the severity of their fellow-men.

It is true the sense of sin against God carries with it a sense also of the baseness of our ingratitude and of our deep unworthiness of all His mercies; and this very natural and wholesome feeling is sometimes expressed in language that sounds excessive and extravagant, as when one exclaims, "I became, as it were, a beast before Thee." But however deep it may be, it carries with it no taint of fear that God will smite in vengeance, or withdraw one single blessing as a fine for transgression. The sinner's only fear may well be of the peril of going backwards, or losing his way on the march towards holiness. He may well

be afraid, in this sense, of *sin* which winds so slowly and insidiously round us before we know the difficulty—nay the awful impossibility—of escaping (in this life at least) from its coils. But afraid of God? Never! Afraid not for one moment of His frown or displeasure; he is only afraid of wounding a heart that loves him, or repaying bounty and mercy with baseness, and separating himself by contamination with sin from communion with his Heavenly Father.

Hence, as it seems to me, all the theology based hitherto on the sense of sin is radically wrong. It converts the sense of sin into a sense of danger, a fear of God and an endeavour to escape His vengeance. The mischief done by it is not merely the inculcation of direct untruth, but the corruption of the soul at its very springs. It diverts the mind from its real duties and necessities to purely imaginary ones. It makes men prefer safety to integrity, it puts salvation before purification, substitutes for the pure love of God the love of ourselves.

It is not the highest view of sin which declares that it deserves punishment. It is bad enough to be sinful already. What could one possibly have worse?

But in many instances the sense of sin is accompanied by the sense of estrangement from God. And this requires our careful consideration. What do we mean by the phrase "estrangement from God?" Let us just look at that quaint old story in Genesis about Adam's first sin. "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the pre-

sence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, and I hid myself."

It is manifest that this fable was written by one imbued with the prevalent and childish notion of punishment. He represents Adam as hiding himself because he was *afraid*. Now the normal and natural reason would have been far different. Adam should have said "I hid myself because I was *ashamed*."

The first tendency of a sense of sin in one who is already religious is to make him withdraw from God's searching eye, and hide himself, as it were, from His presence.

Under the influence of unholy affections, or evil tempers, we find it impossible to pray; still less possible to lift our hearts in thanksgiving. The sense of sin is at first a real cloud over the face of God, and a mist which chills the soul. It is only after a season of reflection and contrition that we can recover ourselves sufficiently to go again to our Father's footstool and claim His grace to amend our lives. What is called "besetting sin," a sin which haunts our lives, and against which, as we think, we have struggled with all the force of our nature, will in time lower terribly our religious tone, undermining our faith, and drawing all the sap from our spiritual life. We may still hope on and trust in God, still be assured of His faithful goodness, and of our final

triumph over our temptation; but the joy of communion with God will be gone, the holy delight in thinking of Him and His ways will fade away, and our prayers and praises will become more and more meaningless and mechanical. This is a very real consequence of yielding to sin which cannot be overlooked, and which may well be called "estrangement from God." It is not that He has gone further from us, but that we have left Him. It is not that His eternal light shines more dimly, but that our eyesight has grown dim, and our fogs and mists have cast their cold dark shadow over His face. Loss of self-respect is ever associated with this bitter estrangement.

The orthodox theologians find a remedy for this in mediation and intercession. Showing Christ as much more kind and patient than God, they move the sinner to believe that all his sin and the sins of the whole world will never rouse his anger or change his loving heart towards us; and so they teach men to go to Christ and get him to reconcile them once more to God, who will do anything for Jesus' sake; and I am not one to deny that this, though roundabout, and to my feelings impious, is not without its success in restoring peace to a contrite soul. The worst part of it all is that it represents man as more kind and faithful and magnanimous than God. The whole plea rests on the idea that Jesus was man as well as God, or else he could never have been so tender and compassionate. All that is added to the glory of Jesus is so much sub-

tracted from the glory of God. The son is exalted at the expense of the Father. Worse, even worse still, the reconciliation or sense of peace with God is procured by illegitimate and even immoral means. The soul is restored artificially by relying on the merits of another, instead of gaining its peace by personal amendment. It seems to me that the whole object of the sense of estrangement from God is to teach and to stimulate self-renewal, self-conquest, self-reformation. If consciousness of guilt be a hindrance to our communion with God, it teaches us then *not to be guilty*. If we would regain our lost peace, we must *earn* it, we must qualify ourselves for its possession, we must purify our hearts, if we would once more "see God." The obtrusiveness of this mediation and intercession is only exceeded by its impiety and immorality. Whatever entices away the soul from the paramount duty of personal amendment is immoral. Whatever represents God as less faithful, kind and imperturbable than Jesus is impious. If the grateful ejaculation

"All I want I find in Thee."

be not addressed to the Supreme Lord of our hearts and consciences, but we must needs require a *human* supplement to the *Divine* deficiencies; then we have been wofully misled, and our highest, most trustworthy convictions about our only Lord God must all be inverted. The sense of sin, even though it is a sense of estrangement, can have at length but one legitimate issue—to bring us back

in humility, contrition and faith to our Father's home, where there is "bread enough and to spare" for our starved souls, and where a pitying, rejoicing love awaits the return of the sin-stained, and shame-stricken son.

We should then fight against that sense of estrangement as a dangerous torpor which paralyses the mountaineer. The more deeply we feel our guilt, the sooner and the more fervently should we seek the face of God, and beseech Him to warm and purify our souls by His gracious beams. To be contented under our clouds and darkness, is to court a moral death. We can but grow worse if we stay away from Him; our only cure lies in our coming back, and this return is the double one of renewing our efforts to conquer our sin, as well as of seeking His face in prayer and confession.

Of course all this is enigmatical to those who never had any religious experience, and to many minds it will ever appear futile to ascribe this or that feeling to the invisible God. But, remember, the world is at present full of persons who do ascribe feelings to God, and while this is a necessity of their souls, what we have to do is to teach them to ascribe the highest and not the lowest feelings to Him. He is said to condemn anger in us. Shall we then ascribe anger to Him, and impute to Him that very character and conduct which He forbids us to show? The superiority of the Divine over the human must be moral or none at all. His matchless skill and invincible power do not of themselves form

a claim to the homage and adoration of human beings, since we are not merely animal but essentially moral. To His skill and power He must add likewise the supremest goodness, if we are to add to our admiration and submission the offering of our hearts' adoring love and willing grateful obedience.

To the Christians I then say:—Be not afraid of God, God is not angry with men. Neither is He indifferent. Neither is He unjust. He is like a father and mother watching their infant in its daily progress and growth; contented with each stage of such moral improvement as we are capable of, and willing to wait for the day of our manhood and maturity; neither angry nor miserable at our failures; ever ready to help us in our weakness, to lift us up after our falls, and yet wise enough to leave all that can be left in our own hands for the accomplishment of our glorious destiny. Read again your own apostolic injunction, and if you can but master the depth of its philosophy and recognise the moral truth of its teaching you will rise up from your superstitious fears, and follow it with manful and brave hearts:—

"Work out your own salvation; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

PART IX.

"We walk by faith, not by sight."

2 Cor. v. 7.

We have now passed in review some of the chief arguments in refutation of the Atheistic objection, that there cannot be a moral Ruler of the universe because the world is full of pain and sin.

We have seen how pain is necessary for our very safety, that it is indispensable likewise to our pleasure, that it is the spring and source of all our intellectual activities and the parent of civilisation, that incidentally it calls into existence some of our noblest virtues, making the heart of man tender, sympathising and loving.

Of sin or moral evil we have also discovered that its origin is due to the addition of the moral sense to our animal nature; that it is not due to a fall from a higher state, but to a rise from a lower one; that thereby the dignity and worth of man have been augmented; that without sin there could be no virtue, and that the highest virtues of all could have had no existence but in a condition where moral evil prevailed; that mankind has made vast progress out of barbarism and brutality solely through the

agencies of pain and sin, and that there is the highest probability that this twofold discipline will issue, as it was designed to issue, in our ultimate attainment of moral excellence.

We see then that the evils of the world are both needful and beneficial even for the attainment of such measure of real good as we already know. But inasmuch as we know but a very small portion of the sum total of this world's history and can only conjecture what is hidden from us in futurity, it would be presumption to deny that the final issue will be wholly good. If we may not affirm this bright issue as a dogma or as a proven fact, neither may we deny it. We may either hope for it or despair of it; and either conclusion must be grounded on reason. If we say we cherish a hope for it, bordering on certainty, the least we can do is to say why we hope, and to give the reasons for shutting out despair. The importance of this cannot be overstated, for the whole plan and order of the world as it is can only be justified on the ground of its issue in goodness. Atheism stands absolutely triumphant if it can prove that there is no future in which each individual will attain at last a destiny which will satisfy the mind, the conscience and the affections.

To state in brief our reasons for this hope of final good, however remote; we must begin with one which the Atheist cannot appreciate. We hope for the future, because we believe in God. Faith in God and hope for an immortality of goodness are bound up together. The one is a legitimate corollary of

the other. It is true we sometimes find them disunited; as there are some believers in God who do not believe in immortality; but never yet have we found any one believing in immortality without believing also in God. The Atheist is at least consistent in denying both. We cannot expect him to attach any value to this belief in God as affording any independent ground of hope for immortality, but it is necessary to tell him the whole truth. We, therefore, repeat that the chief ground of our hope is that first of all we believe in a God who is both able and willing to confer final and permanent good upon every creature under His control, according to each one's nature and aspirations. This is quite enough to satisfy ourselves, but, of course, it will not touch the ground on which the Atheist bases his despair. We must look around and not within us, for reasons which he will admit to be reasonable.

The most obvious of these is that the moral justification of any course is that it will issue in good, that it is the best possible that could have been devised, and that no risk of failure is incurred. That is, if the issue of all this pain and sin is to be in the highest sense good; if these antecedents are necessary, and ultimate failure impossible; the Ruler of the world is amply justified, and the course of humanity is morally what it ought to be. Even the Atheist objects to it only on moral grounds, and, not seeing or believing in the final issue of good, he is forced to condemn it in language of righteous indignation. We are, therefore, at one with him on

this point, and having found common ground we can start again on our enquiry. It seems to me that as moral beings we are bound to look steadfastly at the world under each of the two hypotheses.

Let us take the Atheistic and materialistic hypothesis first—The theory of no God and no Future.

Judged by the moral light which we possess, the whole scheme stands condemned. No words can express the moral indignation which is aroused by the contemplation of the scenes of agony and the fruitless wanton waste of human and animal life and feeling everywhere around us. In the language of the Church's Burial Service, "We have but a short time to live and are full of misery." "We are cut down, as it were, like a flower, never continuing in one stay," and to the vast crowd of human lives, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Here and there, men and women may be found to say they are well content with their portion, and have had much enjoyment in life; but for the overwhelming majority the sad lament of Jacob is all too appropriate, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." Speaking for myself—for every testimony is valuable—I have been hitherto one of the happiest of men. But what has constituted my happiness has not been merely what I have enjoyed, or my immunity from sorrow, but the power of rising over troubles and difficulties, and the hope inspired by my trust in God. Take away these, and I claim that I have been bitterly wronged. If my own life and the life of those dear to me is to be extinguished

by what we call death; then I righteously complain of my varied misfortunes, of my many hours of anxious care, of my failures and sins, as well as of all my sorrows. Surely this handful of days might and ought to have been made supremely joyful. This little span—could not Nature have let me walk therein without clogging my footsteps with her cruel fetters? This little cup of life—could she not have spared me its dregs of bitterness? But if I, who have had so much bliss here, have still cause to complain, and complain bitterly, of such pains and perplexities as I have had to endure, what must be the indictments against Nature of those who have been nearly all their lives the victims of physical suffering or mental anguish? Believe me, I would leave the Atheist far behind in my maledictions against the gross and unspeakable cruelty and immorality of the course of this world, if it were once proved that there is no God; no future; no moral Ruler animated by holiest purpose; no eternity before Him in which that purpose could be fulfilled. The Atheistic theory brings us face to face with a world utterly condemned as a moral outrage by the highest and noblest product of that world. Nature has gone on after cycles of growing change, developing on the surface of this earth one after another order of living sentient creatures, till at last she has developed *man* who turns round upon her, tramples on her vile proceedings, denounces with his most passionate curses her cruelty, her fraud, her mocking promises of *bread* while she feeds him with stones, her allure-

ments into every kind of trap to lead him to his destruction, her basest of all deceptions—the planting within his breast the hope of moral purification.

Behold this Goddess, Nature, thus roused to consciousness in and through humanity! Her awakening is to the abyss of shame! What an issue to such transcendent expectations, to such high pretensions! Better, surely, to have stopped short of this last grand effort of evolving man, if man lives and thinks only to curse the mother that bore him, and sitting on his throne of judgment where she has placed him, denounces her ways and her doings as those of a Fiend.

Do you expect me to believe this as the outcome of all these ages and ages of sorrow and strife? Is it not the very climax of absurdity to suppose it possible that man's mind, and heart, and conscience, must condemn on moral grounds the course of that very Nature which has made him what he is? And yet this is what every righteous soul must do if there be no God, no future. We are then the Supreme Being—the *Grand Être*. Nothing sits on higher throne than ours, and we sit there only to denounce, to condemn, and to curse this fate-stricken world. It is a horrible world if the evil or pain in it be incurable and unfruitful of good. It is a wicked, base contrivance for the infliction of unspeakable cruelty, disappointment and grief. It is immoral beyond all words, since it does not even do evil that good may come; but only wanton, purposeless, malignant evil, of which evil is the only fruit to the countless mil-

lions of those who endure it. Its promises are fraudulent, its hopes delusive, and its leadings treachery. She smites us with birth, mingles bitterness with every cup of bliss, and makes death itself a venomed sting.

No wonder you say there is no God and no future, if you judge only by what you see. We stand side by side and see together its terrible evils. Without God and immortality I grant all and more than you demand of resentment against the present order, or rather disorder—*foul moral chaos* we ought to call it.

But with God above it all and eternity before Him the whole face of nature is changed. The evil is seen to be good, the darkness becomes light, hope drives away despair; the world cannot be morally condemned—certainly not yet; much that would otherwise be unmitigated evil we now see to be valuable aids to goodness.

Which, my friend, is the more probable—your theory or mine? I simply cannot swallow such a monstrous assumption as that moral beings like men are justified in cursing the present order of things, while close at their very feet lies a door leading to a perfect moral solution of our difficulty. They can but curse the world and the day in which they were born into it, if there be no God, no future. If, on the contrary, there be both God and a future, then life is a blessing in itself, the world is a scene of wise and fatherly discipline, and endless progress in holiness and happiness lies open before us. The

past, the present, and the future all make one grand whole, harmonious, resonant with Hallelujahs, peopled with triumphant Saints.

To be otherwise than sad in a world without God and without hope is to libel one's own humanity. Just as it was so unseemly for a preacher to declaim the doctrine of endless torments in hell to a weeping and terrified congregation, and then go home to a quiet luncheon, beaming with smiles and perfectly comfortable; so is it unseemly for men and women who disbelieve in God and immortality to witness unmoved the woes around them, and to "enjoy themselves" all unconcerned in the face of an unspeakably cruel fate falling on all around them. The commonest degree of pity, one would think, were enough to make our hearts bleed for sufferers who will never receive benefit or compensation for their earthly woes, and for still more wretched sinners who will never know the joy of repentance and the bliss of having a conscience void of offence.

That most repulsive text in all the Bible is a fitting one for the Atheist to apply to numbers of our race: "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." That is your sentence, my friend, on the depraved and hardened sinner. You have nothing for him but this:—While life shall last he must be "filthy still." Death shall not plunge him into cleansing fires, nor shall his soul ever know what it is to be pure. He has been one of those wretched failures of which this world is so full, and over which the

souls of the righteous can utter nothing but execration against that Nature who blunders so foully.

Our moral sense, if it testifies to anything at all, bears witness to the existence of a righteous Will, whose purposes and plans must be good. It is one at least of the factors which go to produce faith, and without faith in God it is impossible to walk, but we must flounder on in the deepest darkness. On the hypothesis of a God nearly all becomes clear and bright. It is both scientific and philosophical to assume something. There is no discovery worth having that was ever made but what started from some hypothesis supposed to explain the facts; if all the facts sustained it, the conclusion of course was that the hypothesis was true. If not, it was abandoned for another more probable. But faith in God is much more than a mere intellectual postulate. Its actual effects on the human mind have become recognised phenomena, which no scientific mind will dispute; and, therefore, in advancing the existence of God as an hypothesis we are amply justified. On this theory then the course of this world loses all its bitterness, all its malignity, and every element of despair. The pains we suffer are cheerfully borne because administered by a hand of love. The disappointments, however deep and irreparable, are accepted as the wise refusals of a Father who knows what is for our good infinitely better than we can judge for ourselves. The very sins and weaknesses we deplore lead us in our contrition to hope and strive for the attainment—if not here, hereafter—of

moral purity and strength. The woes and degradation, far worse than our own, which we lament on every hand are felt to be well within the healing resources of Almighty Love. Death, with its cruel separations, is seen to be only a brief journey to another shore where we shall soon rejoin our beloved dead. With God above and life beyond, the sky is bright and clear; all our days are peaceful, if not joyous; all our bitterest sorrows and most corroding cares are gradually melted away in the joy and peace of believing. Last of all, what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Mortals have not time in this brief span to complete their noblest aspirations, or to overcome the evil within and around them. For the highest and best, let them do all they can, must die before they can see the fruit of their toil, the harvest of their sowing, and must leave this scene of perplexity with many a riddle unsolved, with darkness still brooding over the chaos of mortal existence. But God has all time before Him, and He in His faithful and tender fatherliness will lend all that coming time to us for the pursuit of knowledge, for the practice of noble impulses, for the perfecting of our whole natures. On every hand, in the presence of every grief and disappointment, our faith holds us up, and our hope turns our night into day.

And what adds immensely to the weight of all this is that this is morally right—not merely the most pleasant theory but *the only righteous one.* The other theory—the Godless theory—blackens

Nature with undying infamy. The God-theory on the contrary covers Nature with moral beauty and glory. It is not right, but wicked to the lowest depths for man to be left as he is, a moral being in a world of suffering, "having no hope, and without God in the world." But it is, in the highest sense, entirely right that we should have a Father in Heaven, and a home beyond the grave, a light to shine upon our pathway below and a beacon before us to give courage and alacrity to our steps.

Some of my hearers will be interested to learn what an able critic has said, in answer to the foregoing lectures, especially as it bears on the subject immediately before us. I give here the writer's own words:—

"You make out a very strong case, and I agree in your account of the origin of moral evil, no other—so far as I know—being able to hold water. It is the most reasonable, and, apparently, a true explanation of the matter. I do not, however, for all that, consider that a world constructed on such principles is a satisfactory one. It seems rather like sarcasm to say that Almighty wisdom could achieve its ends by no other means."

This I have never said, for we have already admitted that the power of God, however exalted, must be limited by the nature of the material with which He has to deal:—

"You may argue, 'the end justifies the means,' but what—I pray you—does anybody know about the end? The present we do know, that is all. You presume a future which shall account for the present, but the fact of that future being an imaginary quantity takes away somewhat from the value of the argument. . . . Your arguments and reasons and impassioned pleading

seem to me like making the best of a bad case. Not—understand me—that it is so to *you*. You evidently believe utterly in your case, anyone must be convinced of that, but to me all attempts to justify the ways of God to man partake of that character. Why should they need justifying? The mere fact of that being so at all, is suspicious.

"No, the only way for me is to look the hideous realities full in the face, attempting no gloss or explanation, and admit that the sooner one has done with it all the better. Inevitably I come back to that at last."

There are two points only which I need notice in the foregoing criticism.

1. My correspondent says:

"You may argue, 'the end justifies the means,' but what—I pray you—does anybody know about the end? The present we do know, that is all. You presume a future which shall account for the present, but the fact of that future being an imaginary quantity takes away somewhat from the value of the argument."

To this I reply—Of course I do not *know* the end in the same sense as I know the means. We do, however, know the present and that present includes these very important facts: viz., "that there is a power, not ourselves, which is making for righteousness;" and that we have a moral sense; we have in that moral sense a ground for a strong belief in that unknown end. Our moral sense declares that that end and none other is demanded in order to satisfy our sense of justice. I have this morning shewn how the moral sense would be outraged by any order of Nature that does not issue in good, and therefore the "End" is not so much assumed as

implied and involved in the present which we actually know.

2. Why should God's ways to man need justifying? I answer—They need no justifying at all to us who know and believe in, and trust and love Him. They need no justification to the poor cripple tormented all through life with gnawing pain, or to the bereft and orphaned by the side of the yawning graves, so long as they walk by faith and not by sight; so long as they see what thousands of the best of mankind have seen—"Him who is invisible," the daily, hourly, companion and comforter of their lives—"the Everlasting Father — the Prince of Peace." God's ways only need to be justified to those who know Him not, nor believe in His Faithful Love, nor reverence Him as the Lord of their consciences. His ways need no justifying to those who will give Him time to work out His plans.

Well may you say in your unbelief that that faithlessness inevitably and invariably brings you back at last to feel that the sooner you have done with life the better. Well may you carry about with you a burden of despair, and alternate your hours of obliviousness with groanings and maledictions against the world into which by an evil chance you have been hurried.

You are but a living witness of that truth which I have been this day struggling to declare, that of all men *you* are the most miserable, who are "without hope and without God in the world."

Why then is not my heart broken with grief for

you? Why does not my tender and quivering sympathy lead me to weep bitter tears over your unhappy lot and to hurl my curses against the silent heavens and the miscreant earth for creating only to torment you? *Because I believe in God.* Because I utterly trust His way and will with you and with me and with us all. And though I cannot know all the mysteries of life, nor trace the morbid action of your mind to its ultimate sources, I can yet firmly hope that even this your dark passage through the abyss of despair is but one more of those inscrutable pathways which lead to Himself and to the realms of peace and endless light. His voice in our hearts still whispers, even in the howling of the storm:—

"I know the thoughts that I think towards you, thoughts of peace and not of evil—to give you an expected end."

THE GOSPEL OF HOPE AND WHAT IT TEACHES.

"*Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.*"

GAL. vi. 7.

THERE is always more or less danger in the announcement of a new truth, that it will be misunderstood, and consequently misused, by persons whose minds are not fitted to receive it, or who only look at it superficially, or who, owing to previous training and prejudices, try in vain to harmonise the new with the old.

This danger has elicited from a thoughtful writer a kind of remonstrance with me for my recent course of Lectures on Pain and Sin, and I think it suitable to be read as a preface to this morning's discourse.

"Your teaching seems to me too delicate to take root because of its lack of *authority*. I mean that if God being infinitely wise, must be infinitely good, and therefore may well be infinitely happy, *whatever he does* there is no *controlling* principle for man during his earthly career. He can't lose himself—because God cannot find an excuse for losing him. Therefore all your gentle teaching can do is to persuade man that observance

of the 'moral' law will give him the greatest possible present happiness. This is no doubt *true*; but only cultured beings can realise it—and meantime the world goes savagely on and needs bullying and being kept in order by force and fear."

The sense of this last passage is given even more plainly and forcibly in the following extract from another writer, which induced me to write this sermon about four years ago:—

"This belief of yours in final good for all, is all very well for those who *do* love God and believe as you do, as it makes them love Him more; but if a man does not care for religion, and likes his own way and pleasure, it seems a very easy way of taking things, if all *must* come right in the end."

Surely the force of this objection must be admitted, and we should be the first to deprecate the promulgation of any truth which in the present state of mankind would be prejudicial to morality. Yet before we go further, we must insist that if any statement be true—if any theory of the universe or of man's destiny be actually correct—it cannot possibly do permanent harm to any man. It may not be the special truth which he most needs to learn, or the one most necessary to arouse his better feelings, and so it may fall upon his ear without doing him any good; but if it be *true*, it cannot injure him. We should more rightly infer that our statement or theory was not strictly true if we found it absolutely injurious in its effects, than to infer that the true theory should not be propounded because it seemed to fail of doing any good. But, granting for the sake of argument,

that a true theory of human destiny was followed by laxity of morals, that men were encouraged to sin by the certainty that all would come right in the end, we should suspect not that the theory was false, but that it was deficient, that it did not express all the truth which it involved, nor make sufficiently prominent all the facts on which it rested. If real evil resulted from it, as I have described, it would be due to the imperfect manner in which it had been stated, and certainly not due to the amount of truth actually declared.

The belief in final good for all is peculiarly open to this kind of partial statement, and therefore liable to be proportionately misused. We are only just emerging from the dark and sulphurous caverns of Hell-Fire which were supposed to be the only check upon the lawlessness of mankind; only but yesterday, so to speak, did we unlearn the dreadful doctrines of God's primæval curse against our race, and of another God, driven by pity for a doomed creation, leaving His celestial throne and dying a malefactor's death to rescue a handful of us from eternal woe. The crowds who are thronging to Westminster Abbey to listen to Canon Farrar's denunciations against the dogma of Hell-Fire are tokens of this somewhat tardy awakening to the cruel and inhuman character of the fundamental article of the Christian Creed. If the belief in it were not dying out, the preacher would not be listened to. If it were actually dead, he would not waste his time and eloquence in slaying it.

We are in the very act of transition from the influence of bribes and threats into the higher stage of abhorring evil because it is cruel, and of loving Virtue for her own sweet sake. We are leaving behind us the dread image of an inexorable and malignant creditor, and beginning to look up into the face of our Father with confidence and love. The change is tremendous from such darkness into such marvellous light, and no wonder if some weak eyes are blinded for the moment by its glare. The scene is confusing by its brightness, and the new hope seems too good to be true. The Heavenly land bursts upon our view, and enwrapped in its lovely glory, we might forget the ground on which we stood, and overlook the long and rugged path which we must all tread before we can reach the Eternal City.

It is quite natural thus to feed ourselves upon the glorious vision; and only right and kind to shout our songs of joy to those who are climbing the steep hill behind us, and tell them what delight awaits their flagging steps. And so for the most part our words have been of consolation and hope; we have roused our brethren from their feverish sleep in which ghastly dreams and nightmares have oppressed them, and we have brought them to the cheering realities of a brighter day. Anguish and fear have been pursuing them and are yet scarcely distanced; they still need all our encouragement, they have still to feed their fainting souls with hope. Faith and Hope, Hope and Faith, these lovely companions have been too long exiled from fear-stricken

hearts, and we need their guidance and support through life's rough way.

Was it not right as well as natural to go forth with this message of hope and joy as the very foundation of religion? Was it not better to soothe our troubled brethren by every promise of health and strength, than to brood over the weaknesses and sins in which their thoughts had been steeped, ever since their infant souls had learned to tremble? Sin and wrath, bloodshed and vengeance, judgment and everlasting flames had been the cruel tenants of their morbid imagination from their youth up. Would it have been right to begin all over again with sin and retribution and all the familiar sources of their despair? I trow not. It was needful to forget such things for a while, and during the gradual recovery of the soul from its malady to invigorate it with visions of glory and blessedness, with assurances that a Great Infinite Heart was holding the universe in its loving care; with promises that there should come a time when every one should be made holy and happy; and with hope—sure and certain hope—of final good for all.

Preachers of such a gospel, in such a time of darkness, have nothing wherewith to reproach themselves. In obeying a natural instinct they have performed a religious duty. And so long as the doctrines of devils are proclaimed—to the ruin and misery, aye, and madness of sensitive souls—so long will it be our duty to meet them with a direct and fierce contradiction; and whenever the orthodox

say "some of you shall be eternally damned," to rush in among the affrighted crowd and denounce the cruel utterance as a libel and blasphemy against the Most High. We must meet the gospel of damnation with the gospel of universal safety.

But the time comes for more detailed explanation of what we believe concerning the process by which all men are to reach that final good.

After being steeped so long in false notions of Heaven and Hell, we can scarcely wonder that some persons do not instinctively understand what we mean by final good. The old erroneous sentiment still clings to their minds and colours their conception of what we mean by human destiny. Their idea of "all things coming right at last," is mixed up with two entirely false ideas. One is that "coming right" means exclusively "happiness," a sense of pleasure; and the other false idea is that things can ever "come right" at all without being *made* right, yes, made right mainly by ourselves. Now, the correction of one of these errors will go far to correct the other also.

In looking forward to final good for all, the notion of happiness or sense of pleasure is not the thing present to our minds. It may be, and very likely is, inseparable from final good; but that is *not* the thing on which our hearts are set, and which, as we believe, God has promised to us through the yearnings of our souls. What we look forward to is goodness of soul, being made perfect, so that in whatever state we may find ourselves we may be all

that a Perfectly Righteous God desires us to be, and therefore in every sense an unmitigated blessing to every being, human or other, within reach of our conduct and influence. Just as now the prayer of a wise and honest soul is not for mere enjoyment, not for any increase of his personal comfort, nor for any decrease of his personal trials and troubles, but for such improvement of his own character and conduct as shall make him more useful and kind to his fellow-men; so our aspirations, if they are manly and sound will not be for what are popularly called the "joys of Heaven," but for righteousness and true holiness, for perfect ability to love and do the perfect Will of God. And this is what we believe to be the final destiny of every moral being in the universe.

Whether the happiness and fulness of joy will come with it, is not only no business of ours; but having an eye to such recompense will defeat itself, will leave still one stain on the purity of soul which God would fain see without spot or blemish or any such thing. Hence it is easy to see what "coming right at the last" really means. Nothing does or ever can "come right" in this region of moral progress. Everything has to be *put* right and *made* right, and if not done here, it must be done hereafter. Not done for us, but done by us. God will no more do for us what He has ordered us to do for ourselves, than He will work any miracle to the subversion of His laws.

Our Gospel of boundless hope might turn our

heads, if it meant that we have a right to expect to take Heaven at a bound, and to leap into all felicity without the toil and difficulty of gradual progress. But it means no such thing, but the very reverse of this. It has one and only one promise—"You shall succeed if you try." Its one encouragement is, "Not a single moral effort shall be lost." Its most powerful incentive to renewed moral effort is —"God has made you for this destiny." You *must* become good. It is of no use your trying to evade it. It is for you only to determine how long the process shall be. You can hasten or delay it at your pleasure or at your peril. But you will be won over to goodness at last. The end is inevitable, you cannot fight against your destiny. So the sooner you yield to holy influences the better. You will have no peace until you do. You may make your path as devious, as thorny, as rugged as you choose. Its length and its hardships are all your own. As you sow, so you shall reap. Try your own way—seek only your own pleasure, resist the law of human life which commands you to live for others, and you will find yourself defeated at every turn. You will curse your own folly for your self-will—your own gratification will become ashes in the devouring. Your pursuit of your own pleasure, even in the most refined occupations, if that pleasure be all you pursue, will mock you with its emptiness and its brevity. For every defeat of the moral law, it will come back upon you with redoubled severity. "Be sure your sin will find you out." "The

wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

Now we regard all this as part of the Divine order, the Providence of God.

Most repugnant is it to my feelings ever to descend into the old language of threatening which disfigured the obnoxious creed of my youth. And I cannot bear to be bordering upon it now; but if the plain question is put to me, "What does it matter how we live, if everything must come right in the end?" I must for once stoop from the serene calm of a nobler altitude and say, "If you think it does not matter, try it. Try to live the life of an immoral animal, and do it at your peril. You will only multiply your sorrows and make your way back again to the light of human goodness inexpressibly harder and longer. You will only be gathering round you the stings of self-reproach, and piling fuel upon fuel for your own burning. The Hell of the Christians is as untrue as it is coarse and blasphemous. But think not that because we have swept away that hideous dream, there is no torment of soul for those who break God's laws. There is anguish left in the reality of human experience quite enough to scare you from presumptuous sin and to keep you from playing with such dangerous tools.

We believe, and we repeat, without wearying, our delight in a God of infinite mercy. But we believe that His mercy shines brightest in His meting out to every transgression its exact penalty, in passing

by no offences which His chastisements can correct. "Thou Lord art merciful," cried the Psalmist, not for letting us off, not for punishing the innocent instead of us—but merciful "because thou rewardest every man according to his work." Try to escape that if you can—you might as well try to live in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, or make your home in the depths of the sea. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The notion then of things "coming right" at last is a fallacy. Once more I repeat, they can only be made right by each man's own moral exertion. Supposing it be true that such a glorious destiny is before us as that all men shall come at length to perfect holiness; instead of being turned into an encouragement to sin, it seems to make the cause of sin more hopeless than ever. It builds up a wall in that direction through which no human being can pass. He *must* retrace his steps. He must find the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Under the light of this Gospel of Hope, sin is visited with prompt and speedy retribution, instead of being allowed to go on with impunity accumulating into a heavy debt which only makes men more reckless. Under the old Gospel, a man might sin as he pleased, so long as he believed in the Atoning Blood at the last; and a capital chance they all had, for the instances of sudden death are very rare; and he must be a poor creature indeed who could not get absolution on such easy terms. But under the new Gospel of final good for all, no one can ever escape

the just consequence of sin, and perhaps, when we know more of its baneful effects, our sorrow will be the more acute, on account of the injury inflicted by it on others. No one can ever hide himself from the accusing conscience or deliver himself from the dread spectre of remorse.

If it be a question of moral influence, which is the more potent—the doctrine of final good, or the dogma of damnation? There can be no question that the former rightly understood is unspeakably the more powerful as it is unquestionably the more reasonable. Hell-fire only exercised a deterrent effect on those who were in no danger of it, while it did not touch in the slightest degree the hearts of those who, according to theory, were going straight into it. The doctrine of Hope at least warns quite as much as it encourages, and promises only what we must ourselves achieve.

I know some people brought up under the old hope and expectation—the old longing for perfect bliss on the other side of life's last fence, who cannot take kindly to this idea of *growing* good—of getting only a little better and better as the ages roll away; and who turn from it with a sigh of weariness, dreading the renewal of moral conflict in the world to come. To them, I have a word of peace. We do not know any details of that which is beyond the grave. We have no right to speak in God's name about it at all, except only to express our fervent hope that this life is not our end, and that a future lies before each one of us for the per-

fection, or immortal progress, of our nature. We base this hope on our idea of God with whose perfection this future for man seems absolutely bound up. But we know not how long, or how short, the journey upwards may be, or what fuller knowledge awaits our exit from the earth, to make us cheerfully acquiesce in all that lies before us. Your instinct for repose may be just as true as our forecasting of new toil and new conflict. Our lots may be different. God is not tied and bound by any of our speculations and fancied schemes. Do not spoil the little remnant of earthly life by forebodings of future trouble which may never come. God's will is sure to be the best for us. And if we cultivate contentment here in this first scene of our discipline, we shall be better fitted for the unknown cares and trials of the next.

Finally, is there not something grand in the conception of human destiny which we advocate, inasmuch as it reconciles the Doctrine of Necessity with that of Free-will? God has made man sufficiently free to make it only a question of time with him when he will accomplish his own destiny; and yet man's nature is so constituted that of necessity he will come at last, of his own free will, to work out the Divine decrees.

I cannot leave the subject of this discourse, without once more deprecating the low ground of rewards and punishments which might have suited a lower stage of mankind than that we have reached. Even if there were no God, no destiny for man

hereafter; surely it still matters very much what we do and how we live. It may matter by comparison little to ourselves; but much—who shall say how much—to those around us, and who are dependent on our hearts and lives for those crumbs of affection and sympathy which may fall from our burdened tables. My young friend, never mind about your destiny, and things "coming right." But, if you have not a heart of stone, do care very much about your life, your conduct, your principles, your habits and, above all, your motives, for your father's and mother's sake, for your brothers' and sisters' sake, for the sake of your betrothed, your young wife, or for your one cherished friend. Then if there be a God in Heaven, it will please Him the more to see you live righteously and soberly out of love to your fellow-men, than if you did it out of love to Himself or through hope of joys to come. Thank God! whatever becomes of Christianity, nothing can shake the everlasting mountains on which true virtue is built. We cannot unmake the heart of man, turn back the ceaseless flow of human progress, or quench for ever the immortal flame of Human Love.

"THE LORD'S CONTROVERSY WITH HIS PEOPLE."

"*Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!*"

MICAH vi. 2, 3.

AFTER due allowance made for poetic or prophetic license, we find in these words a singular appropriateness to the existing state of the orthodox world.

The Israelites in the days of Micah seem to have believed in the divine origin of the Levitical code with all its endless and wearisome sacrifices and ceremonies. Whatever may be the justification for the appointment of that system—and it can indeed be largely justified—it never seems to have exercised that universal control over the people of Israel which we might have expected from their belief in its divine appointment. They were always falling

into idolatry and forsaking the prescribed worship of the Temple for the groves sacred to Baal and Ashtaroth, and for the golden calves set up in Bethel and in Dan. I venture to suggest as a possible solution of this gross and prevailing defection that the Israelites found the worship of Jehovah irksome and perhaps costly, while the idolatries around them were better calculated to entertain them and had an attraction of their own in the voluptuous rites with which, *e.g.*, the worship of Astarte was associated. On the other hand the worship of Moloch would attract the more serious and superstitious, inasmuch as fear would inspire them to offer to God the most precious of their treasures—their own offspring. At any rate the words of Micah in my text and in the succeeding verses show how far the prophetic mind was in advance, not only of the people but of the priests. It was the interest of the priesthood to assert and keep on asserting the divine origin of the Levitical rites whether they themselves believed in it or not. In all probability they did believe in it heartily, and their reiteration of it would at length become wearisome to the people, who would naturally prefer what was pleasant to what was right. The prophet Micah, like his predecessor Isaiah, seems to have thought very little of the importance of these Levitical rites and ceremonies, and in the passage before us denies, as plainly and emphatically as words can speak, the divine authority of the Levitical system. It appears that he had the insight

to perceive that the people ran into idolatry under an impulse that they must do something or other of a sacrificial and ceremonial kind, in order to gain and keep the favour of the gods ; that their defection from Jehovah was primarily due to a radical misconception of the Creator's claims upon His creatures; that if they only knew rightly what God had really demanded of them, they would need neither the sacrifices of the Temple nor the rites of Moloch in order to obtain peace with Him. Micah was an utter sceptic as to the Levitical system, as he was a thorough hater of idolatry. He no more believed that God had dictated to Moses and Aaron the minutiæ or any larger details of the Temple worship than that a Baal could hear their cry or a Moloch could heed their blood-stained altars. And he told the people so to their face. He lifted up his voice and cried aloud, hoping that the everlasting hills would take up his words of joy and re-echo them to the furthest confines of the Syrian land. According to the wont of oriental prophecy he puts his message of peace into the mouth of Jehovah himself:—"O my people, what have I done unto thee ? And wherein have I wearied thee ? Testify against me." God then reminds his people of the words spoken by the much-abused Balaam when, at the bidding of Balak the King of Moab, and after the rejection of repeated bribes, he steadfastly refused to go beyond the word of the Lord, or to curse those whom God had blessed. Taught by his fruitless efforts to turn the decrees of a righteous

God into the maledictions of a fiend, Balaam asks:—"Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil?" (these things being commanded in the Levitical law to be offered by the worshipper). "Shall I," he goes on to ask, referring to the worship of Moloch, "shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

This then is the Lord's answer to His people when they would testify against Him for laying upon them burdens grievous to be borne; for imposing upon them the dreary and wearisome ceremonies of bloody sacrifices and burnt offerings. When they cry out against Him for this needless and costly demand, His answer is—I never made any such demand at all. I want neither your calves nor your rams nor your rivers of oil. "I will not reprove thee because thy sacrifices and burnt offerings were not always before me. I will take no bullock out of thine house nor he-goat out of thy fold. For every beast of the forest is mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are in my sight. If I were hungry I would not tell thee, for the whole world is mine and all that is therein.

Thinkest thou that I will eat bull's flesh, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows (*i.e.*, keep your promises) unto the Most High, and call upon me in the time of trouble, and so will I hear thee and thou shalt praise me."

Sublime picture—the grandeur of which we cannot worthily appreciate in these modern days! Yet think of the daring, the heroic truthfulness of him who ventured thus in God's own name to deny the Divine authority for the sacrifices of the Temple. If Leviticus was true, God was perpetually taking bullocks out of their houses and he-goats from their folds; continually was He demanding their flesh and their blood and refusing His people forgiveness if they withheld their burnt offerings. Now the prophet cries that it is false from beginning to end; that Jehovah never demanded those offerings from His children—only asked them for their heart's love and trust, and entreated them to seek a refuge in His bosom in the day of their trouble! "Who is a God like unto thee," cries the prophet, "that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again. He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth of Jacob and the mercy of Abraham which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

Poor faithless souls those children of Abraham were, and centuries had to roll by before they could believe this glorious message of peace and hope. Isaiah had said much the same, had shewn the same manly and courageous defiance of priestcraft, had uttered the same solemn warning against substituting formal worship and sacrifices for loyalty of heart and self-sacrificing duty to our fellow-men. And when Micah takes up the strain, he goes back even to the days of Balaam for his most powerful arguments and telling metaphors; bravely bearding the Jewish hierarchy, he denounces their pretension to Divine authority. Years again roll by and another voice of one who trusted in God is heard in the cities of Judah and the plains of Galilee, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth—I will have mercy and not sacrifice." And now after nearly two thousand years of trial and bitter persecution, we see this great people wholly released not only from their idolatry, but from their superstitious regard for their Levitical system. Sacrifices and burnt offerings have been swept away. The temple is no longer a shambles. The priests are no longer butchers. They have no Aaronic or Levitical priesthood, their only sacrifices are the contrite heart, the humble spirit and the loving services of eager charity to the sick and needy. God is no longer another and a milder form of Moloch. He is their own Father and Friend, their faithful Shepherd in all their wanderings, their everlasting Home in their bitterest exile.

The lesson has been learnt at last, in the fierce though purifying flames of disaster and anguish. And they are here to-day, in nearly every nook and corner of the habitable world, as God's own witnesses to teach us also the truth which it cost them so much to learn. The more they believe in God, the less superstitious value they attach to the written records and unwritten traditions of their wonderful history.

I would gladly pursue this theme, but I must hasten on to shew the special application of these words of Micah to our own times.

The orthodox Christian world is just now labouring under a terrible burden created by the discovery that one of its cardinal dogmas—that of endless torments—is no longer tenable, is positively untrue, because positively blasphemous against God. The particular burden of this discovery lies in the fact that this dogma has been revealed to mankind in a collection of books which it is deemed a sin to regard in any other light than as the inspired Word of God Himself. Worse still, it is not only revealed and spoken by the human instruments of God's revelation—by apostles and evangelists—but stands chiefly upon the very words of their own Saviour whom they believe to be none other than the Incarnate God, and who became incarnate and died on the Cross for no other purpose in the world but to rescue some of us from that eternal torment in which no sensible or pious person can any longer believe. They are thus landed on the horns of a

shocking dilemma. They must either believe that God is unspeakably cruel, or that what He says is not true. They have not got rid, as we have, of the incubus of an infallible Bible; and so at present they must bow before it as the very Word of God—at the same time their hearts are telling them that part of this very Word is so shocking, so inhuman, so incredibly cruel that God cannot possibly mean what He says.

For any one who wishes to see this dilemma wrought out with consummate skill, with considerable spirit and finely adorned satire, there is in the *Fortnightly Review* for December, 1877, an article entitled "Hell and the Divine Veracity," by the Hon. Lionel A. Tollemache.

In passing I cannot but notice with some amusement that a Review with associations like those of the *Fortnightly* should betake itself to a task which occupied some of us twelve and fifteen years ago, and which, about six years since, some of the *Fortnightly* school laughed at as only "slaying the slain." The present writer in the *Review* has certainly managed most successfully to crowd in as many illustrations of Biblical contradictions and immoral errors as he could possibly gibbet in the limited space. We heartily welcome his efforts, and are glad to think that the *Review* has had the courage to own itself mistaken in regard to the death of revolting dogmas and to furnish us with so vigorous and lively a champion.

But to return. What is the Lord's Controversy

with the Christian world? "O, my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied Thee? Testify against me."

The Christian world may make answer:—

Thou hast covered us with dismay and confusion of face. Thou has given us Thy Holy Book wherein thou hast written all Thy righteous will, and hast commanded us to believe it all because Thou hast written it by Thy holy inspiration. Nevertheless, herein we find many words about things visible which we cannot reconcile with what we see and know in Thy works before us. Thou hast moreover passed a sentence of never-ending torments on all who do not believe Thy word or who reject Thy Son as their Saviour from damnation. Herein we read this awful impending woe. If we deny it we are undone; if we add to it or diminish from it Thou hast sworn to take away our part from the Book of Life, and we must take our place with the damned. And, yet if this be *not* so, if Thy threatenings of just displeasure were greater than Thy holy purpose in order to frighten us into Thy fold—then, O Lord, we are uncertain when Thou speakest, and Thy promises of endless bliss in Heaven may be exaggerated too. We are in a great strait. For our hearts think of Thee as more just and tender than Thy written words; and we dare not disbelieve Thee, lest we disbelieve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and lose our interest in his merits, and for our unbelief we suffer torment in the eternal flame. O, God of Truth, we have been wronged! Either

this Book is no Word of Thine at all, or it loads u with unspeakable sadness, since it tells us that Thou art either cruel or false.

And what is God's answer to this mournful complaint? If I adopt the Eastern form, remember I lay no claim to the honours of a prophet—much less to speak in God's Holy Name. But were I writing a drama the Divine answer might shape itself thus:—

O, my people, remember the words of the faithful of old time, who had no book or Bible or priest or prophet to teach them; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewithal shall I come near and make myself known to my children?

Shall I, the Father of the Spirits of all flesh, who know what is in men, and whose hearts I have made tender and true that they may learn my ways and find me out in all the paths of righteousness—Shall I send my messengers with spoken or written word which they may not fully heed, or fully understand, or accurately repeat, when I can come myself into their inmost souls and tell them all I wish them to know, and shew them all that I wish them to see of my goodness and glory? Shall I write my thoughts in one of the thousand languages of men which only one race can understand, and leave countless multitudes in darkness till my words can be translated? Shall I leave it to the feeble and ignorant to make errors in the transcription and errors in the translation? Shall I write my thoughts in books like those of mortal men, so that they must dispute among themselves which are mine and which are

only human? Shall the words so written by me be so difficult of understanding that they must need the commentary and exposition of the learned, and that the learned cannot even agree among themselves how to interpret them? Shall I wrap up my messages of truth and love among records which contain false theories of nature, false reports of history, false principles of justice and morality? Shall I place my promises of infinite mercy side by side with threatenings of infinite wrath? Shall I wait and leave them thousands of years in darkness and then send to them my Son, declaring him to be my *only* Son, though they call me Father and they are all my children? And shall this Son only visit one small corner of the earth, and speak only to a few thousands out of all mankind, and only during the few years of a short life? Shall I invest him with powers of magic to startle his hearers and reveal his disguised divinity, when all the while wonders upon wonders of surpassing and awful grandeur are for ever before their eyes? Shall I bid him mingle with words of pity and tenderness the most horrible threatenings of my displeasure, my wrath, my unquenchable vengeance? Shall I bid him leave behind him not a single line of writing, not a single utterance capable of absolute verification? Shall I cause the books which tell of his Divine errand, and repeat his Divine words, to be the subject of endless dispute as to who wrote them, or when they were written; and shall I take scrupulous care that not a single original manu-

script should be preserved; that endless discussions should grow out of their contents, and that no infallible arbitrator should ever put an end to their controversies?

Shall I, loving my children with an everlasting love, treat them as if they were bastards and not sons, and, holding them aloof from my bosom and my home, only treat with them through my Son Jesus and cast them all out unless they are shielded by his intercession and sprinkled with his blood?

Shall I then transfer to priests and popes on earth the functions first ascribed to Christ and demand from all my children before I will own them as mine that they be dipped in water, and shall eat the flesh and drink the blood of him who died for them? and that the priest shall hear their confessions and forgive all their sins?

O, my children, what have I done unto you that ye should dream this frightful dream? Who hath bewitched you with these foul calumnies against my yearning loving heart?

Never yet have I spoken in audible voice. Never yet have I written on parchment or on stone. Never yet have I put into words of human speech the tender thoughts I think towards you—thoughts of peace and not of evil—thoughts divine which never have been, never can be, uttered in language of man. Behold I am against the prophets who use their own tongues and say, He saith. Behold I am against the prophets who steal my words every one from his neighbour.

What do I require for my access to your troubled spirits, but the might of my own great love, the touching of your quickened consciences? Ye have but to open your hearts and I will enter therein. If ye are poor in spirit I will make you rich. If ye are weak I will make you strong. If ye are foul with sin I will cleanse you. If your hearts are stony I will melt them. If ye are groping in the thick darkness I will be your light. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else, and beside me there is no Saviour. Ye need no other gods but me. I want no atonement, no bloodshedding, no sacrifices, animal or human or divine. My son give me thine heart, and I will make it all that I wish it to be. I will flood it with my joy and overflow it with my glory and it shall be clad for ever in the beauty of holiness. If ye seek me ye shall be found of me, yea, when ye shall seek me diligently with your whole heart. I am nigh unto all them that call upon me, yea unto all such as call upon me faithfully. Even before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear. I am neither deceitful nor cruel. Well might ye have reproached me with both cruelty and deceit, if I had written your Bible. But I loved you too well to be so cruel. Blind and ignorant men and priests have bitterly deceived you, I have had no part nor lot in the matter. I keep eternal silence. I am the Lord, I change not. I refrain from speech that ye may not be deceived, that whatever ye may learn of me shall be only

truth and never falsehood. Your Bible will be a mine of treasure to you if ye will only see that it is written by man—Man's thoughts about me from beginning to end. But if ye take it as my Book, my written Word, it will be worse than worthless; it must lead you into all error, into blasphemy and at last into despair.

My friends, bear with me for this impersonation which superficial minds might regard as irreverent. You understand, I feel sure, not merely the aim and scope, but the motive of what I have said and my reason for throwing it into this form. The Lord's controversy with His people is going on now and is not likely to be over yet. He is pleading not in human speech but by the powerful reasonings of the human mind, by the keen perceptions of the human conscience, and by the deep emotions of the human soul. He is leading us all, and the Christian world too, by slow degrees out of darkness into His marvellous light, and we need not fear what the end of this Controversy will be. We who saw it coming, years and years ago, only too well knew that the belief in the Divine origin and authority of the Bible was the only foundation on which has been built the heathenish fables and the blasphemous deceits of Christian dogma. That belief is hard to kill, but it must be killed. We may do much, I think, by such trenchant weapons as that article in the *Fortnightly Review* to which allusion has been made. But that kind of weapon makes terrible wounds and lacerates the soul that it pierces. We shall do more, far more,

by lifting the hearts of men to a region above the Bible—raising them higher and higher till they see the light of God's countenance as it shines on peaceful lives and pure hearts. Do not take from the crippled their crutches until they have gained sufficient strength to walk alone. Do not take from the blind their Bible, till they begin to believe, if ever so little—like those who wrote the Bible—in the Great God above.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord; when I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be my people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying: 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me from the least unto the greatest."

ATHEISM.

PART I.

"*Having no hope and without God in the world.*"

EPH. ii. 12.

I WILL ask you to bear in mind that this present discourse is purely introductory. In the succeeding lectures I shall endeavour to show that the balance of probability lies on the side of belief, from an examination of the nature and constitution of man, taking for my motto those words of the late Harriet Martineau, who came to a conclusion the very opposite of our own :—

"It is my belief that we can in no way but by sound knowledge of Man, learn—fully and truly—anything else; and that it is only when glimpses of that knowledge were opened—however scantily and obscurely—that men *have* effectually learned anything else."

You must be aware that we regard it as our special mission to the orthodox Christians to endeavour to liberate them from their present position of doubt and dissatisfaction by winning them over to our more rational, simple and consoling belief in God. But we have another high duty to perform

—another mission to fulfil. There are around us on every hand, almost in every home, men who are practically Atheists, who, without actually denying in open speech that there is a God, yet are totally indifferent to the subject and care nothing at all whether there be a God or not. Some of these have joined the school of thinkers who look upon one question at least as definitely settled—who at all events have satisfied themselves that if there be a God, it is impossible for man to know anything about Him, and who, therefore, think it is a waste of time, energy and thought to pursue any inquiry into things Divine. I believe that by far the larger number of Atheists are men of this school, and the obvious causes of their Atheism may be found in the wide-spread diversity of religious opinion, which shows that even those who believe in a God cannot agree among themselves as to His nature or attributes or dealings with mankind. Atheism is also due to the entire failure of Christianity to present us with a religious belief in harmony with the Reason, the Conscience, and the Affections of man.

The breaking up of their old belief has landed them in a waste, howling wilderness. They have nothing in exchange for what they have lost. They are "without hope and without God in the world." Now it is a fact, which I never contemplate without the deepest delight, that there are some amongst us, some even of our most devoted friends and supporters, who were for a time

Atheists, and whose hearts were clouded over by utter infidelity, but who recovered for themselves the blessed solace of a firm faith in a good God and whose religious instincts have found new life and fresh occupation.

Years and years ago, many of us must have foreseen what one of the immediate consequences of the downfall of orthodoxy would surely be, viz., the temporary but total eclipse of faith in the hearts of thousands. Francis W. Newman foreseeing this prefaced all his work of destruction by sending forth his book entitled *The Soul, her Sorrows and Aspirations*, which was in reality an "Essay on the Positive Foundations of Practical Religion;" and his instinctive desire to furnish a foundation for true Faith in place of the old one, which he was about to remove, has been shared by other great reformers in this age. In the works of Theodore Parker and of Francis Power Cobbe, and even in the purely critical works of Bishop Colenso, the same desire to establish a pure and true faith is everywhere manifested. The spirit which has animated the movement with which we are specially connected is essentially the same, and no libel could be more unjust than to say we only want to pull down errors and have nothing to put in their place.

I conceive it to be, then, a very important part of our work to endeavour to stop the further progress of that Atheism which threatens to become so popular, and to win back the poor wandering

souls who have no Divine shepherd to feed, to guide and to defend them.

But before we can undertake such an important task, we must carefully consider how it is best to set about it. There are always two or more ways of doing everything, and we may do more harm than good if we adopt the wrong method. Experience of certain wrong methods will furnish us with one or two excellent cautions which I will now briefly touch upon.

(1.) It was the custom for religious people to approach the unbelieving and the heterodox with an air of superiority; to treat them as if they were wicked, or at least greatly to blame for their unbelief or their heresy. Now if we would do any good, if we wish to be true to our own principles we must forswear such a grave mistake as that. The Atheist is for the most part on a level with ourselves, morally and intellectually, not unfrequently our superior in what is noblest in man. He at least has made the greatest sacrifice which a human heart could make for the sake of Truth. In his loyalty to what he believed to be true, he gave up all the bright possibilities of a believer's joy, and abandoned all hope of a life to come. We cannot without folly as well as impertinence lecture such a man as the missionary lectures his idolatrous savage. We cannot without indecency approach such a man with our patronage and address him with a lofty commiseration. The best attitude we can wear is that which most truly accords with

our inmost humility as seekers after truth. What are we ourselves but learners? We may be very sure that the highest truth we clasp to day with fond and grateful emotion will one day have to give place to a truth far higher still, and we may be equally sure that, if we are ever so much nearer to the truth than the Atheist, we must still have some admixture of error. So if we betake ourselves to the Atheist, it must be to listen and to learn quite as much as to speak and to teach. Even granting that the truth is on our side, we may be very certain that he has some truth to tell, some correction of error to impart which is of priceless value. Let us argue with him (and argument means fair-play on both sides), and not dictate to him. Let us remember that our dogmatizing is just as unwelcome and useless to him as his dogmatism is to us. We must not be afraid to argue even with the Atheist; for an opinion or belief that will not bear hard reasoning is in a rapid decline and will soon have to be buried. If our Faith be true, it will out-match all falsehood. If our belief in God be worth anything, it will be armour-proof against the most subtle denials. So dearly, so intensely do we love Truth, that we would give up God Himself if God were a delusion, and we would hug our own despair rather than be the dupes of a false hope. Let the Atheist see then that we are quite as much in earnest as he is; quite as desirous of learning from him, as that he should learn from us. Such respect given can only win respect in

turn. It is painfully true that many Atheists are the most vain and conceited of men—quite as pharisaical as the old chief priests and scribes down in Judæa —quite as scornful, in their pity of us "blind believers," as we have ever been towards them. But what has made them so, and who is to blame for it? Why, the scornful attitude of religious society during the last hundred years. Voltaire, Tom Paine, and the long list of their successors, though falsely called Atheists, were considered by Christians as the offscouring of the world and a disgrace to mankind, not for blemishes in their lives, but for heresy in their opinions; and the real Atheist in the present day is by religious people looked down upon as contemptible, or dreaded as dangerous. It is, therefore, the fault of believers if Atheists have grown vain and conceited. False blame always tends to exaggerate the sense of our own importance, while merited praise tends to remind us of our shortcomings. If possible, we must change this state of irrational hostility, and drive out the pharisaism of Atheism by first expelling the pharisaism of Belief. Mutual respect is the key to mutual understanding, and, without that, discussion and argument are vain.

(2.) Another caution I would mention is that against supposing that modern Atheism is *necessarily* connected with domestic immorality or social anarchy. I would not myself dare to prognosticate the results were the belief in God entirely to fade out of the hearts of our nation. There might be

for a time a most fearful insurrection against the moral laws by which society is bound together, but it is impossible to say with accuracy what would be the result, because men and women are so illogical. Believing as I do in God, and assured as I am by the past history of our race that we are ever going forward, I should expect that God would provide in the future, as He has ever done in the past, for the moral government of His children. At all events, so far, the average modern Atheist is no ruffianly breaker of laws, or violator of the sanctity of human rights. Some of them indeed are among the world's most righteous men, most faithful and affectionate husbands and fathers, most true and generous friends of mankind. Most of them are lovers of order as well as of freedom and "use their liberty," as if they believed themselves to be "the servants of God." It will not do then to make the mistake of assuming that the Atheist is necessarily our moral inferior. It is false in fact, and to go upon that assumption is not only to insult a body of highly honourable men, but to ruin our own work at the outset.

(3.) In the third place, we cannot be too candid in our discussions. It is a very common fault in theologians to shut their eyes to unpleasant facts and to refuse to draw obvious conclusions.

If we desire to influence reasoning men we must show our own knowledge of the laws of the game and use skilfully and fairly the weapons of logic. Nothing helps sooner to confirm any one in his

own opinion than to hear it feebly assailed or unfairly opposed. The weapons of modern Atheism are very powerful and finely tempered. We cannot, with a wave of the hand, or a shrug of the shoulders, get rid of the army of unpleasant facts and stubborn difficulties in the condition of humanity and of Nature around us, which will be arrayed against our belief. We must ignore nothing, we must not gloss over a single flaw in our reasoning, or make any leaps such as delight theological controversialists. The battle of argument must be fought inch by inch, and there must be no stratagem, no surprises.

(4.) As our real aim must be the discovery of the truth, it will never do to give *undue* weight to the personal value of our own convictions. That value is enormous, and of its weight as an argument I shall presently speak; but it must not be used in its wrong place. The pleasantness of a conviction by itself is no more proof of the truth of that conviction than the pleasantness of an action is a proof that that action is right. "Pleasant, but false," is quite as good a proverb as "pleasant, but wrong." To believe a doctrine, *only* because it consoles, is to confess that it has no other logical basis, and therefore, is not to be accepted by reasonable men. We must be prepared to be utterly loyal to reason and truth, remembering that if there be no God it is our manifest duty to ascertain and prove the fact, and that if there be a God—a God of truth and equity—it will not please

Him to deceive ourselves, or to prop up our belief by false arguments. If there be a God, the very Atheist commends himself to the Divine approval whenever he is true to himself. For what other purpose was our reason given to us than to be supreme in all intellectual enquiries? It was surely intended to raise us into a condition superior to all fear, and far above all bribes. It was given to be the master of our spiritual emotions as well as the governor of our animal passions, and we cannot honour God by renouncing our reason, or suffering ourselves to be carried away from the stern truth, however terrible, by the allurements of a false hope or by the terrors of a dismal certainty But, then, if truth be our chief aim and not our own mental enjoyment, we *must* gain by it in the end, it will make our souls more heroic, it will prepare us the better for that clearer knowledge of God Himself which may await us as our reward. But if, on the other hand, we let the Atheist see that we only believe in God because we want to be comfortable, we put a stumbling block in his way and show ourselves to be unworthy and selfish in our aims and no true seekers after truth. The moral effect upon him of such a discovery would be quite fatal to his conversion.

(5.) The last caution I would name is that against mistaking the exact limits of our enquiry. It must ever be borne in mind that the Atheist and ourselves stand on the same ground in denying that the existence of God can be demonstrated in the

same way as one demonstrates a mechanical fact or a scientific proposition.

Time and breath would be spent in vain if the disputants were to miss the main point of the question. We do not want to do the impossible task of demonstrating or defining the existence of God. We want only to make it clear that the balance of probability is on the side of belief—that it is far more likely that there *is* a perfectly good and capable God, in whose hands every real or apparent evil is sure to issue in final good to every conscious creature who is the subject of that evil, *than that there is no God at all;* still more probable than that there is a God to whom the sufferings and failures of His creatures is a matter of unconcern.

If we will only bear in mind that the Atheist can never prove that there is no God, and that we can never prove to him that there is one, we shall more easily confine our discussion to the balance of probabilities; and that, in all conscience, is wide enough to occupy the deepest and most laborious thought.

It is the province of reason to examine these probabilities *pro* and *con;* it is not the province of reason to believe anything. That we have, most of us, a faculty of believing in God, which is not mere credulity but a reasonable reliance of a dependent creature on the goodwill of its Creator, is one of the facts of the universe which it will be impossible for the Atheist to ignore; but that faculty is not called upon to reason about its object

any more than the eye is called upon to reason about what it sees.

We may first reason upon probabilities, and thus call into exercise our faculty of faith; or we may first believe and then justify our faith by the exercise of our reason.

In conclusion, I will say a few words on the immense value of our personal convictions as to the existence of God and the hope which they inspire. Having in the most unqualified manner asserted that *truth* must stand first in our regard, that all case and comfort and even hope itself must be given up if they clash with the claims of truth, I trust I shall not seem inconsistent if I say that the joy and consolation of believing in God is one of the strongest arguments in favour of His real existence. For this joy and consolation, this perfect peace in the present and hope for the future, are exactly what we needed to enable us to bear up under the pains and evils of our mortal life, and to watch with submissive hope the fearful sufferings in the world around us. The strongest argument the Atheist has against our belief lies in the sin and misery which abound. I do not see how men and women can behold all this, believing it to be the work of blind Nature, and yet preserve their reasons. To take such a view of life as that described in the last pages of the *Martyrdom of Man*, by Mr. Winwood Reade, and to have no God in whose good purposes to confide, no hope for a future in which present evil shall work itself out in *everlasting good*, would be to darken the whole

atmosphere of life and thought—to paralyse moral energy and never to smile again.

What conclusion could we draw from all we see and suffer, if there is to be no beneficent issue to it all, but that we are the sport of a malignant fiend who has not only amused himself thus at our expense but mocked at us with false hopes and fond delusions, creating us indeed unspeakably nobler than he is himself and worthy to put our feet upon his neck? If there be no redress, if all these woes and strugglings and sorrows and irreparable losses are purposeless, the universe itself is cursed; it has stultified and degraded itself by evolving such a creature as man who can sit in judgment on the morality of its course. All its starry gems, its gorgeous drapery, its siren songs, its fascinating forms, its entrancing magic, its lustrous light and heat, all these its enticements and allurements testify not to the benevolence, but to the infinite perfidy of the whole design. They are no better than the deadly gaze of the venomous snake or the treacherous blandishments of the harlot. All nature is a foul cheat if the aspirations of moral man are false.

But I turn from this dark picture, which is, after all, but a hideous passing dream, to the fact that under all trials, under every degree of suffering, physical and moral, men and women who are universally acknowledged to be the noblest of our race, have been sustained by belief in a God who is filled with all the tenderest and purest feelings of humanity *without* sharing any of its faults, or

weakness, or ignorance. Their minds resting on God, they have not only borne with fortitude unspeakable tortures, but they have looked full and steadily in the face of the world's moral corruption, and their hearts have whispered to them, "Bear it all; it will all yet turn to good. Be patient, God's ways are mysterious and to our eyes often entangled, but good shall come at last to all. We know not how, or when, or where. But He who made us what we are, to long only for *good*—not for mere happiness, but goodness—must Himself do good and only good. And in Him we rejoice, yea, and will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Without God we are without hope, and the whole world is "a blunder infinite and inexcusable;" but with God we can abound in hope, and His mysterious dealings with us and with Nature are made not only bearable, but even appear as steps unto Heaven for every suffering creature. Verily, God is as real a necessity to the life of reasoning moral men as the glorious sun to the planets around him.

Let us not then forget the enormous value of this personal experience as an argument to meet the strongest argument on the other side. The world is only seen to be hopelessly wretched and base when the light of God's righteousness has been shut out from the soul of man. But everywhere and in everything there is ground for hope when the fearful shadow has been withdrawn, and the *beams* of His eternal love burst forth upon us once *more, and* turn our night into day.

PART II.

"*Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.*"

PSALM viii. 6.

IN undertaking a task of such magnitude and difficulty as that of supplying reasonable grounds for belief in a Perfect God, I am deeply conscious of the inadequacy of my own powers and knowledge; and it is only natural for me to approach the work with fear and trembling, lest through my feebleness or errors I should give a new occasion for the Atheist to triumph. But while I thus flinch and am full of diffidence, I am unspeakably consoled and strengthened by the fact that whatever is really true will prevail at last, and cannot suffer permanently from the strongest opposition or from the feeblest support; it is also an encouragement to remember that mine is only one poor voice out of many; that no one is pledged or compromised by what I may say; that I speak for myself alone; and that, should I fail in my effort, the only logical conclusion to be drawn from it by the Atheist is that one man has tried without success to convince the unbelieving world of the reasonableness of his

faith, not that his faith is unreasonable. My failure will not prove that Atheism is true, though it might in the eyes of some persons be thought to damage Theism.

I have here to reply to an objection which reached me last week, in reference to my first discourse on Atheism. A correspondent writes :—

"You introduce the words 'law of Nature' as if the law of Nature was not sufficient to account for the phenomena of Nature. I would like to ask if it is not as reasonable to suppose that a law of Nature could develop itself as to suppose that a God could develop itself. . . . . If the natural laws required a maker, how much more would the maker of the natural laws require a parent."

The writer seems to me not quite clear as to what is meant by natural laws or laws of Nature. These are abstract terms for convenience of language and must not be confounded with the things for which they stand. Grammar, *e.g.*, is the law of language, not language itself. Grammar does not come first, but language comes first and from observation men deduce grammar as the method or plan followed by men who speak and write. Thus deduced it afterwards becomes a law or rule for the guidance of children and men in learning to speak and write.

What we call a law of Nature must not be confounded with Nature itself, *i.e.*, with the actual operations of Nature. These operations come first in the order of thought, and men by observation noting their regularity or unvarying sequence de-

duce the law, and use the term "law of Nature" in describing such unvarying sequence. These laws are no more than the record of our accurate observation of Nature's works. We only use metaphor when we speak of God making the laws of Nature, because the "laws" themselves are not objects which can be made, but are only the uniform methods in which certain actions are performed. The actions, so to speak, are the language and the laws are the grammar. But this grammar, this uniform law which we discover in Nature's operations necessarily impresses the mind of man with the idea that something like what we call mind and intelligence is at work behind or within Nature in order to produce regular sequence at all. The moment we detect plan or design, we are compelled to admit a designer. The doctrine of evolution pre-eminently teaches the theory of design. If *only* by our own intelligence we can understand phenomena or recognise the law or method by which they occur, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that intelligence caused the phenomena and secured the uniformity of sequence.

When we speak of God or of Nature acting by certain laws, we merely mean that that is His or her way of producing phenomena. But whether we take God or Nature in this connexion as the prime agent, we cannot get rid of purpose and will and intelligence, which must absolutely be in operation to produce any result which man can only understand by means of his own intelligence and

by analogy drawn from his own experience of will and purpose.

If the term Nature be used, it is only another name for God, or for that intelligent cause within or behind it.

In answer to the second part of my correspondent's letter, I have only to say that a self-existent, self-originated universe, is just as difficult of conception as a self-existent, self-originated God ; indeed, both ideas are wholly incomprehensible, and the conception of a self-existent, self-originated God is only adopted because the alternative, viz., a God who is not self-existent, is equally incomprehensible to the human mind. If there is causation at all, there must be a first cause; and yet it is in the power of any one to ask what produced the first cause, thus pushing the inquiry ever further and further back, without the slightest hope of ever getting an answer to the question. Both conceptions are simply unthinkable—the eternity of God and the eternity of matter. It is of no use for the advocates of either side to go out of their depth.

Now our first step must be to describe if possible what we mean by the term God. The Christian, the Theist, the Pantheist, all use the same term, but each in a different sense. I pass over the first, with which all of us are familiar, to notice the difference between the Theistic and Pantheistic senses of the term God. The Pantheist denies self-consciousness to God, while the Theist affirms it. The Pantheist affirms, not merely the co-extension of

God with the universe, but their absolute identity; the Theist, denying this identity, affirms that God is distinct from the universe, however inseparably they may be united. The Theistic idea of God is of a Being without form, without material substance, one whole and indivisible; a Being who is self-conscious and who possesses intelligence, power, and love, only in a degree far more exalted than we can comprehend or describe; and who therefore exercises will and works from design. The Theist confesses that he has no other means of gaining a conception of God, than that which is afforded him by the contemplation of the works of God, and especially of His noblest work—man. From a contemplation of the highest part of man's nature, viz., his intellect, conscience, and affection, he rises by a single step into a conception of a Being who possesses all these faculties in their fullest perfection without any of the limitations of matter, time and space. It is in vain that an opponent hurls at us his taunts about anthropomorphism. It cannot be avoided. We have reached the loftiest peak on which human feet have stood when we have found what man can do and be. Man is our only key to the problems of Nature, our only ladder from earth to heaven. And in no other way is his present greatness attested, or his glorious future promised, so distinctly as in his own power to make, as it were, a God in his own image and after his own likeness, and yet one stripped absolutely of every flaw and defect, and even of the remotest tendency

to human weakness. Men have never invented a God morally inferior to themselves—the idols have only outlasted their time and have become anachronisms. As man grew loftier in mind and morals, the once-revered images became first grotesque and then hideous. I, therefore, defend the anthropomorphism of the Theist as a merit, and do not apologise for it as a defect of his system. Used with fidelity to the principles of progress in which he believes, his anthropomorphic conception of God is a constant guarantee of higher and higher knowledge, till he shall arrive at the innermost sanctuary of the Divine presence. At all events, if there be a God, it is clear enough that He has given us no other means of conceiving of Him at all.

Man knows his own superiority to the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea; to the trees and flowers, the rocks and hills, the towering mountains and the foaming sea. He knows his own superiority of nature, even in his extremest physical helplessness, to the wild and fierce forces which play about him. The winds and the waves, the roaring cataract and even the burning lava he turns to his own service and becomes their lord; the very lightning becomes the swift messenger of his thought, and the blazing sun itself, though enthroned afar in unapproachable glory, is made to unfold the secrets of its awful flame. A human mind which has mastered its subtle beams draws them through a fragment of crystal and reads the chemistry of the stupendous

conflagration. Wonderful as are the resources even in inorganic matter, yet with our little fragment of knowledge and our sense of spiritual activity we have come to call the great masses of worlds around us "inert or unconscious matter," and to regard the physical forces everywhere in operation as inferior to the emotions and aspirations of the human soul. From all this, but one conclusion can be drawn, viz., that there is something even in ourselves radically superior to that visible universe from which we ourselves were evolved. Man is thus forced to feel the gulf between the seen and the unseen—between the grandest exhibitions of power in the world of Nature and the spiritual forces at work within his own soul. It is in vain that you tell him how he has been evolved in the natural course of things from the simplest form of animal life; you will only increase his wonder at the powers thus originated without shaking for one moment his confidence in their possession, or his faith in their grandeur. He does not care, except as he may care for every grain of true knowledge, how he came to be what he is, what chemical or molecular changes in inorganic matter produced his compound and complex organism; but he does care supremely to know himself as a *man*, and to wield the royal sceptre over that portion of the visible universe in which he has woke up a king.

In vain, too, will it be to shew him the dissected brain of one of the world's great teachers and say "we cannot find anything here but what you see;

and all that made the man what he was lies now in those bony hemispheres; in a few days it will rot and be dissolved for ever." He will turn round upon you and say "This is only what I expected you would find in the noblest head that lifted itself proudly above the intellects of man; what I have felt all my life is that I am not identical with my body or with any of my organs; that I am something superior to what I see and feel, and this body is nothing more to me than the house in which I have dwelt and shall dwell till I die. Even if I never live again it cannot alter the conviction of my life—that I have had a something, either the product of my brain, or the impalpable and undiscoverable germ from which my brain was produced, which is *myself* as distinguished from the body in which I now speak and hear. All that can be handled with your forceps and seen through your microscope is of course doomed to utter and irrevocable dissolution—the particles will never again be united in their former condition. But if they sprung but yesterday from a mollusc and are doomed to utter dispersion to-morrow, one fact remains, *I am that I am*, I have come into possession of these batteries of cerebral matter, and I shall have to lay them down, but they and I are not one, and never were. However essential to our speech and action upon earth, to our communion with each other as fellow-beings, I have always felt that I was something greater than they, that by my will I could keep them in health, exercise them in study and action, give them rest when weary,

and alas! make them ache with pain by over-exertion, or by senseless folly."

Should this seem to be a digression, let me remind you of what I am aiming at. I want to state with emphasis the fact, not merely of man's superiority to the visible universe, but also the fact *of his own consciousness of his superiority.* With the materialist he can go all lengths in the admission of the entirely physical origin of his bodily frame and of all its organs, and consequently he can go all lengths with the materialist in saying that there is nothing discernible by the eye as a basis of immortality. But he is no less certain that he is superior to the body in which he dwells, than certain that he is superior to the sun without whose beams his body could not have come into being at all.

Now if this superiority, which is instinctive in thousands and millions of our race, and in the highest portion thereof, be admitted, we have ground for justifying our search for God by studying man. Of course it would not do to study man alone without studying also the other inferior works of God, for that would make our conclusions too visionary and speculative, but it would be more erroneous still to study only the physical phenomena and leave the soul of man out of the range of our enquiry. If we studied only the physical phenomena we could hardly come to any other than the conclusion of the modern Pantheist, whereas if we study both the phenomena and the human soul we naturally arrive at Theism.

There is not much, if any, token of conscientiousness in the outer world. Individuals are simply ignored by the forces of Nature; pain and pleasure are scattered about in what seems to be wild caprice—*i.e.*, in utter disregard of the merits or demerits of the individuals on whom they fall. But the whole thing apparently works pretty well so as to produce a constant supply of flowers and butterflies who are not expected to stay too long in their little patch of sunshine, and who must always be expecting to be done to death at any moment by a sudden change in temperature or a downfall of rain and hail. Still, no matter, a thousand dead things are soon replaced. The laboratory is always open, resources are abundant, the workmen never rest, and so far as a perpetual transformation-scene is the order of the day, Nature certainly does her work with infinite skill and industry. But you do not want a moral God to do all this, it does itself apparently; once set going, no one cares to enquire how, it cannot help going till some fine day it will perhaps go to pieces and begin all over again, taking the first employment that offers itself. I, for one, do not wonder at the Pantheism or, as it may more truly be called, the Atheism, which comes of regarding only the *outside* of things —*i.e.*, of studying only physical phenomena with a determined blindness to the intellectual, moral and spiritual nature of man. If Nature outside of us were *all* we had to lean upon for instruction concerning God, I confess we should be driven either to

attribute to Him frightful want of conscientiousness, or—what is more logical—to do without the hypothesis of a God at all.

On the other hand, if we take both together and explain the one by the other, searching for all that nature has to tell, and remembering that if God works there, he also works in human hearts and souls, we shall be able at length, if not to explain every seeming moral anomaly, at all events to give Him as much credit for good intentions as we do to our fellow-men when we cannot exactly see what their aims really are, and when we cannot help finding fault with their methods.

The old maxim, "Never let children or fools see half-done deeds," should have its weight in the correction of any impatient murmuring against the course of Providence. To Him we are but as children; by the side of His wisdom our greatest knowledge is but folly, and, therefore, if we are permitted to stand by His side and follow His dealings, as the world's great Artificer, a becoming silence should mark our reverence, and a patient watchfulness should be our tribute to His wisdom and skill. "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few," contains a profound caution which we shall do well to remember.

Having attained a clear perception of the superiority of man—as the highest product of nature yet known to us—our first question must be, "Is there, or is there not, some Being higher still?" Now,

most men, and even Atheists, readily admit the possibility of the existence of creatures higher than men. They do not know what other worlds contain, of course, but they think it quite possible, if not probable, that there are higher intelligences somewhere, but still evolved, like ourselves, from the universe. They will not take the next step and say with me that it is possible that there is one Being not evolved, but the source of evolution, above all other Beings, who has perfect knowledge of the universe; but this seems to me but a very short step indeed from the admission that possibly higher intelligences than our own exist somewhere.

Here, however, we must use the method of balancing probabilities. Supposing that there were no supreme and perfect intelligence, then, as far as we *know*, man would be the supreme Being of the universe—the one intelligent creature who stands on the highest pinnacle of knowledge. He knows more about the world than any other being. But what does he know, as yet? He is only just beginning to find out how little he knows in comparison with the sum total of things actually present and visible. He knows very little about the past, next to nothing about the regions of the world which are invisible, and nothing at all about the distant future. A creature only of yesterday, not so long ago an ignorant savage, a little earlier still only an ape, how could he know more than he knows at present? But he has, nevertheless, learnt that there are system and law prevailing in every part of the

universe—that invariable sequences attend given actions and mutations of force. Man has at least learnt to banish from scientific language the names of "accident" and "chance," and he has tacitly admitted the presence of active intelligence in the evolution of all things. Nature has taught him all he knows. All his sciences, of which he is justly proud, are records of facts and phenomena actually observed, discoveries on his part of what has been done or is now being done without his aid, not inventions of his own or results of his interference. Nature is so manifestly guided and controlled by intelligence that the mind of man finds its most exquisite delight in reading the secrets of nature, and in watching her wondrous developments. Man further admits that we ourselves are products of this carefully designed whole. That we are the latest, noblest and fairest fruit of nature's skill; and yet some men will hesitate to confess that the intelligence which arranged this grand evolution is grander far than one of its products! If there be no higher mind than the mind of man, how could man ever have been evolved? *Ex nihilo nihil fit* stands good yet, and we can never be persuaded that the intellect of man is the offspring of that which had no intelligence. A perfect knowledge of all the sciences, and of thousands of things yet unknown to us, was required to produce even this little globe on which we live. Had there been false chemistry, or deficient mathematics, or ignorance of the laws of astronomy or of optics, what hopeless chaos would

have ensued. One false step would have ruined the whole. Can we, then, who attach so much importance to our own tiny share in this knowledge, pretend that no knowledge at all was needful to produce the stupendous whole? It must be infinitely more probable that a Supreme Mind is in existence who knows the whole, while we only know a small part, than that man is the supreme intelligence himself.

Moreover, if there were no such supreme intelligence, the universe, supposing it to be self-evolved (and of course unconscious, since it is not intelligent) has only just come into self-consciousness through one of its parts, viz., man. It had been, so to speak, asleep all these cycles of ages till man was born and his intellect dawned upon the world, and for the first time the universe realised its own existence through the intelligent consciousness of one of its products. I do not think absurdity could go further than that. If there be no God, then man is the supreme intelligence, and the product of what we must admit to be the most profound wisdom, must then be wiser than that wisdom from which he sprang; and if there be no self-conscious intelligence but man then the universe is only just now, through man, becoming aware of its own existence.

I throw out these fragmentary hints for abler men to take up. They are only a specimen of what may be said for and against the probability that there is a self-conscious supreme intelligence at the

root of, and behind, all visible and invisible things. But if we take man as our key to the solution of the problem, we shall find much more in him than his mind which justifies his belief in God, and of this I will speak another day. I conclude by saying that I shall be thankful to any one who will write to me to correct any errors and to point out any flaw in my arguments.

PART III.

"*Thy law is within my heart.*"

PSALM xl. 10.

LAST Sunday we were considering the argument for the existence of a Supreme Intelligence which may be drawn from the intellectual part of man's nature. Our next step is to examine the moral part, and to endeavour to show that the Conscience of man furnishes strong ground for our belief in a perfectly good God.

Let us first enquire what is the proper function of the conscience. In the first place it seems to be a faculty distinct from the ordinary reflective powers of the mind which we sum up under the term Reason. I do not now enquire how conscience is in the first instance generated, or whether or not it be some phrenological organ more or less conspicuous as a bump on the human head. It is neither my province nor within my grasp to settle such questions as to its origin or physical construction; I have only to deal with it as it seems to most men to act a part in our complex nature and to influence our conduct.

In affirming thus the distinctness of conscience from the reasoning faculties, I only speak of it as it

appears to my thought. It does not and cannot teach me what is right or what is wrong. Only my reason can tell me that; but as soon as I perceive what is right, my conscience demands me to do it; as soon as I perceive what is wrong, my conscience forthwith commands me not to do it. Many have been the strifes in the world owing to the confusion between conscience and reason. Our knowledge being defective, our reasoning must be sometimes fallible, our conclusions as to right and wrong must be sometimes false, and yet the conscience only sanctions what seems to be right and forbids only what seems to be wrong. It follows as a matter of course that people will sometimes do wrong conscientiously; *i.e.*, not as wrong, but believing it to be right. "The time will come when he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service," is a good illustration of this perversion of mind. Many persons will thereupon jump at the conclusion that conscience is not to be trusted, and that it must be over-ruled by superior authority external to itself—whereas the fault lies not with the conscience but with the reason which is imperfectly enlightened. The conscience has nothing whatever to do with drawing the conclusions of the reason; its only function is to endorse with all the weight of its sanction whatever the reason has pronounced to be right. Conscience even in its apparently worst perversions is not perverted at all, is still loyal to the best that is put before it. It cannot help us to make up our minds in the least degree; it waits

quietly till this process is completed by the reason, and then steps in with its powerful mandate to demand that the best alternative shall be adopted and pursued. It has always seemed to me a great mistake to blame the conscience for those moral errors which have been perpetrated in its name. Conscience is ever loyal to duty as duty, never sanctions any wrong as wrong, is a perpetual witness in the soul of man for all righteousness; and it differs in different men (and in each man at different times) only in strength and intensity, in its power to control the life; it does not differ in being morally inferior or superior.

If my conscience sanctions what another man's conscience would condemn, that only shows that there is a moral difference of opinion in our respective minds, not that his conscience is more loyal to what is right than my conscience, nor mine than his. Looseness of language is largely responsible for many popular errors. We often speak of one man as conscientious and another as unconscientious, when the real difference we wish to describe is the difference of their moral opinions. We ought never to use these terms "conscientious and unconscientious," except to distinguish between the man who obeys his conscience and the other who disobeys it. We take too much for granted that our estimate of what is right and wrong is shared by every one else alike; and then come to the false conclusion that those who do not do what we believe to be right are acting against their consciences.

Whole races of men we have heard stigmatized as wanting in conscientiousness, because they are remarkably untruthful; others because they are habitual thieves; others because they love to shed innocent blood and their land groans with murder; others because they are frivolous, fickle and vain; others because polygamy is their law, others because they practise polyandry. In all these cases, you find conscience quite as much at work as in ourselves, commanding what is believed to be right, forbidding what is believed to be wrong. Some men lie and steal and murder, &c., through their want of clear and vigorous perception that lying, stealing and murder are wrong. Their education has been deficient, and the inherited tendency to these habits has not been resisted; they are ever ready with reasons to justify their conduct or to make very light of it. Otherwise it would have been impossible for whole populations to connive at these outrages, and to shield the guilty heads from the penalties of the law. But these same people, taught from their youth up to regard some act of religious observance as the highest of all duties, and the neglect of it the most wicked of crimes, are very conscientious in the discharge of that duty, and manifest the functions of conscience in that particular to a striking degree.

If ever the question is raised, "Why does the conscience bid you do this?" the sole answer always is, "Because it is right." Never in any case is it "because it is wrong."

The conscience is, I grant, not equally strong in

all men. In some natures it has more, in others less power to influence their conduct. But this is only like all other human faculties. The reason, the imagination, the affections, the hopes and the fears, vary considerably in strength and degree in different men, and so also the conscience varies; in some it is the lord of the whole life; in others it is hustled into a corner and seldom suffered to raise its voice. But it is sufficiently universal to be argued from as the common property of human nature; and in reasoning about the source and foundation of all things, the conscience is as much entitled to be considered as the intellect. Moreover, if we would argue fairly we must take the average quality of the conscience rather than the more rare instances of those who hardly exhibit any conscience at all.

In a treatise on the Reason of man, it would be manifestly unfair to take only the undeveloped state of it as it appears in a child, or the diseased condition of it as it appears in an idiot; so in speaking of the conscience of man, we ought to take it in its more complete and perfectly healthy development in the noblest moral examples rather than in its earlier and undeveloped state.

We are searching for indications of a Divine Being among the works of the universe: we have found, so far, that man is the noblest of them, by reason of his intellect alone, but we find that he has something else which, in his own estimation, he reckons nobler still than intellect—viz., Conscience, or the

faculty which urges him to do what is right and avoid what is wrong, and this faculty is, in its normal exercise, one of the greatest blessings which man could possess.

In the first place, it marks afresh our superiority to the physical world. While everything around us is by the laws and constitution of its nature designed for selfishness, to win its way if it can in the struggle for existence; while even the body of man with all its functions has precisely the same nature, and might lawfully (were it not for the reason and conscience) study its own comfort and well-being alone, and without the smallest scruple enrich and adorn itself by the ruin of others; while the unbridled indulgence of our physical instincts would lead us to the most profound animalism and bestiality—the conscience is the chief faculty of our being which rescues us from this degradation and actually alters the whole natural course and tendency of our lives.

That we should, to some extent, lead animal lives is not merely inevitable, but necessary and good; and therefore we find the conscience, duly enlightened by reason, sanctioning a certain degree of animalism for the very purpose of carrying out a benevolent design; but the checks and limits which the conscience puts upon our self-indulgence are of a nature to cause us, at times, positive pain and annoyance. We cannot obey the conscience in everything without trampling on our physical nature, and sometimes not without permanent injury to our health and brain. Self-denial and mortification of

the flesh (and I use this term in the very widest sense, and not merely in the sense of asceticism) are absolutely necessary to the perfect supremacy of the conscience when enlightened by reason. If my reason tells me that such and such a thing is wrong, *i.e.*, will inflict injury on others, that does not necessarily prevent my wishing to do it. I cannot help *wishing* to do it, if the gratification be very great; and do it I should to a certainty, but for that wonderful monitor within, who says "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

The collision is so complete between the higher voice and the impelling instinct, that one can only feel that the two are radically different in nature, and must have had a different source. This struggle between a strong desire and a higher law within the same breast, if it gives any witness, bears testimony to the exalted nature of man, and almost drives him in thought to the threshold of that heavenly home where he was born and cradled. To have the power of doing intentionally what one shrinks from doing, and to deny oneself the pleasure which is so fascinating and which one longs to do, is to prove the immense superiority of our inner selves over the visible universe.

Here I must pause to notice an objection which may be urged—that whenever we obey the conscience, we only do so to gain a greater pleasure than we relinquish. It is said that we are still selfish after all, and dread remorse more than the

present pain of self-denial. Now I cannot, of course, speak for others, but for myself I deny this with my whole soul. I am perfectly certain that it is neither fear of greater pain nor hope for greater joy that makes me endeavour to obey my conscience. Many a time in my life I have had nothing at all but pain for doing what I thought to be right, and I did it too, grudgingly, half regretting my own self-denial at the time, and wishing that I had not been so conscientious. It is unfair to mankind to put such a construction upon their submission to that imperious call of conscience. To us, who are believers in God, perhaps the hope of being perfectly conformed to His holy will in some far-off future may be an attraction entering into more than half our moral struggles ; but nothing can be more false than to say it is always so, or to deny the possibility of a man doing what his conscience demands from the most disinterested motives. For does not Conscience itself sit in judgment with Reason upon motives as well as conduct? Does it not condemn, as unworthy, all motives of action the core and kernel of which is selfishness ? No doubt in our imperfect state our motives are not always pure and perfectly disinterested, but the soul of man has at all events risen up to that height in which it deliberately distinguishes pure from impure motives, and while she gives her solemn approval to the nobler, she condemns and denounces the baser. There is all the difference between seeking to be true to one's higher nature, and seeking

greater happiness. It is true we cannot avoid the happiness, but we disqualify ourselves for its attainment the moment we fix upon it a longing eye. What often determines our choice is the strength of our conviction that a thing is right, not the possibility of our being the happier for it afterwards. The efforts made by some to depreciate the force and value of conscience are unworthy of men who profess to be students of fact and phenomena; for if there had been no cases of genuine disinterested doing of duty for duty's sake, we should never have been able to discover the difference between that and seeking our own happiness. Man has detected the superiority of the one motive over the other only after having witnessed or experienced the higher motive in himself. Had it never been done, men would never have imagined that it could be done.

And this brings me to notice that the conscience enlightened by reason always urges us to *do good* to our fellow-men rather than to make men happy. An unenlightened benevolence, such as the animal instinct of an indulgent parent, which leads to the spoiling of a child, is a mere impulse to give happiness, and is on that ground actually condemned by the enlightened conscience, because that happiness not only does not tend to the child's real and lasting good, but tends to his present and future degradation. In its higher state the conscience bids us aim exclusively at the cultivation of all virtue in ourselves and in others. It teaches us always to sub-

ordinate happiness to holiness, and often deliberately to forego and withhold happiness that goodness may ensue. Truth and righteousness would be preferred not only before wealth and comfort here below, but even before an eternity of mere enjoyment without personal holiness. Thus, on every side it seems that the superiority of our inner nature becomes an antagonism to the outward and visible. "The flesh warreth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other."

The contrast and hostility between them we all feel, but which of the two do we reckon the higher, the nobler, the truer part of man? Surely the conscience —the conscience which makes us mortify our flesh with its affections and lusts, which often and often mars our happiness and embitters our pleasure, upbraids us with reproaches and stings us with remorse, that voice which hushes our cry for happiness, which will not endure a single selfish plea, but demands unquestioning obedience, and bids us fall down in the very dust before the majesty of Duty. We all in our secret hearts revere this power, whether or not we obey it as we should. At least we pay to it the homage of our inmost souls, and feel how great and grand it is to be its slave.

We have here then something in man which we cannot find in the physical universe, where happiness is the aim of every living thing. Every single being in every class of animal life, including the body of man, is constituted to seek its own happiness first,

but in man we find a principle entirely at war with this universal instinct, a power that forces us to break the natural law of mortal life, and to seek for that which is supremely higher than mere animal safety and enjoyment. For the sake of goodness men have learnt not merely to suffer pain and loss themselves, but to undergo the still worse pain of inflicting suffering upon others. We would deliberately hurt their bodies and mortify their desires if by so doing we could raise them into the exalted condition of goodness.

Now to me, I confess, this fact is a greater revelation of a Divine Being than even the intellect of man. For ignoring altogether the fact that men have almost universally regarded the Conscience as the Vice-gerent of God, the mere possession of a power which claims the mastery over our whole natures, which disturbs our animal repose, and which demands the deliberate surrender of happiness for the sake of truth, righteousness, and every form of duty brings us face to face with a power—call it human or Divine—which, whatever it be, is absolutely transcendent over nature, and suggests to our minds the existence of another world altogether in and around us, in which the laws and forces of the visible universe have no place. Were we to grant that our intellect is only an animal organism, we should still be at our wits' end to account for the conscience on purely physical grounds; and we could never get over the anomaly and absurdity of the universe evolving and evolving itself cycle after cycle, till it produced an

element at variance with its own laws, a power and a force which deliberately set them at defiance, and a conscious being who calmly rejected for the sake of virtue the most enticing happiness placed in its path. If we could get over the intellectual difficulty of Atheism, we could never get over the difficulty which is presented by the conscience. I do not deny that there is antagonism in the physical universe—it abounds everywhere; it is in accordance with its own principle of "Every one for himself;" but this antagonism is wholly different from that which exists between two distinct portions of one and the same being; greater still is the difference when we observe that the higher law often condemns as morally wrong what Nature herself tempts us to do.

I cannot pursue the enquiry further at present; it is enough that the human conscience is not merely superior, but antagonistic, to the selfish principle in Nature, to prove that if we would search for indications of the Deity, we must make *man* the chief field of our enquiry.

PART IV.

"*God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*"

1 JOHN iv. 16.

WE now come to the third branch of our enquiry into the nature of man in search for indications of a Supreme and Perfect Divine Being.

We have perceived in the intellect of man manifest tokens of a Supreme Intellect from which it sprang. We have discovered in the conscience a power not only superior, but antagonistic, to the forces in Nature; and we must now direct our attention to Human Love.

What is Love? This sacred name has, alas! been shamefully misapplied. It has been made to stand for its very opposite—selfishness. It has been used to denote the most imperious of our animal instincts, the gratification of merely physical desire; even the mere desire to attain such enjoyment has been profanely called love. Far be it from me to deem anything which God has placed in the nature of man as unholy or unclean. The animal instinct referred to is exquisite and sacred, the source of untold happiness, and the fountain of domestic virtue; but then it is not *love.* When people talk of "mak-

ing love" and of "falling in love," they are using expressions of profound inaccuracy for which the poverty of our language is the only excuse. The French nation are still worse off, having only one word for to like and to love. The affection which subsists between lovers, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters is *sometimes* nothing more than a merely animal attachment to each other which they share in common with the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. It is all called "love," and we cannot in a day—no, not in a generation—change its name. But the time seems to have come for us to make long and loud our protest against the use of ambiguous terms. Words do re-act more or less upon those who use them, and if we persist in applying one and the same term to two or more absolutely distinct things, we shall come in time to lose sight of the distinction between them, and in that case the higher sense will be forgotten and the lower one alone remain.

Now to discern what love is we must contrast it with what it is not.

We find everywhere reigning in nature the law of self-love, self-preservation, self-indulgence and self-advancement. We own its necessity. No living thing is safe without it. It is given to us that we may live as long and as happily as we can, and that we may promote our own earthly advantage. In the struggle for existence this law bids us without scruple trample on the rights of others if they have any, and then might becomes right. In reference to self-indulgence

it bids us get all the pleasure we possibly can; it takes no account of the pleasure of others except in so far as it may minister to our own. And as for self-advancement its maxim is to be first in the race if we can. Its cry is, "Every man for himself."

Now it is easy to see without illustration that were this the only law which governed humanity our time would be divided between avarice, lust and war. We should have nothing else to do but to give free play to our appetites and to smite and murder everyone who stood in the way of our gratification. Supposing that a certain amount of civilization had been reached by mutual concessions for the attainment of happiness, then you would have still a state of society, if society it might be called, in which selfishness would prevail, only somewhat refined and gilded over by conventionalities. You would still have men seeking to make themselves rich at the ruin of others; to indulge their animal passions at the cost of their neighbour's felicity, and to do each other to death, only in a slower and less brutal manner than by bloodshed. They would still unscrupulously push themselves to the front if possible, not caring whom they crushed or trampled under foot in the struggle.

Bret Harte, an author to whom I shall again presently refer, among other writers, has given pictures of life in the Far West of America, wherein all that we could imagine of such a state of society has been enacted within this century. Lawless, ruffianly selfishness has been the rule, because most of the

men gathered in those regions were mere animal men, carrying their whole animalism with them into a region where they had no law but themselves. This was the coarse and brutal picture of the reign of selfishness. But we need not go so far as to San Francisco to see the same selfishness under a more refined aspect. There are men and women in all our great cities, aye and in the country too, (let us hope there are but few of them) who behave as if they were animals and nothing more—human animals with the cunning and resources of human skill, education and prudence, who live for themselves alone, and who seldom feel what it is to *love.* They follow their strong instincts for pleasure and ease, their unscrupulous desire to enrich themselves on the racecourse or at the gambling tables, their studious regard for their own health and the supply of every luxury; and they do not hesitate in the pursuit of their own indulgence to force their rivals or dependents down into unspeakable misery, or leave others to die in disease and poverty rather than forego one of their accustomed pleasures.

We may fairly hope that such are extreme and most rare instances; but dress it up as finely as you can, you will only get one result out of entire obedience to the natural law of selfishness. You must have avarice, lust and murder, and all manner of crime.

Now true love is that principle, which we find almost universal in human nature, which impels us to resist in a measure this law of selfishness, to over-

come its dictates whenever they tend to entrench on the rights and welfare of others. Love will go great lengths in sanctioning the law of selfishness, but there is a point where it will stand up and resist it. It will sanction self-preservation until another's life is in peril. It will sanction self-indulgence until that indulgence becomes robbery of the happiness or well-being of another. It will sanction ambition, and even gathering of gold, so long as the means employed do not hinder a companion in the race.

Love will hide itself beneath an apparently selfish disguise, and all at once it will leap out upon you in all its glory, melting your eyes and heart. It is that in man which redeems him from being a beast—for man without love is worse than any beast which the Lord God hath made; but when he loves he becomes more than animal, more than man I had almost said, and stands forth in the very image of God.

With the world so full as it is of real love, if we will only look for it, illustrations would be endless. But every wish felt, every word spoken, every deed done *for the sake of others*, is a witness of true love.

Some may say, this is only the function of conscience over again. But in reply I say, that the brilliancy of love outshines that of conscience as the sun outshines the moon. Love is conscience in an ecstacy—it is a perfect enthusiasm of goodness, because it does not stop to reason out with itself and to balance the *pros* and *cons* of right and wrong, but with eager bound rushes to its goal and acts

without reflection, the slave of inspiration. Conscience says, "Do this because it is right." Love says, "I will do this for you." Conscience mercifully keeps us mindful of our responsibility when love is absent or cool. But love has no responsibility, and acts upon its Divine impulse, needing no reminder, no prompting, no commands. We fall back upon conscience only when deficient in love.

By love, we pass out of ourselves into our object, as it were; we seem to have merged almost our own consciousness, sympathies, desires in the soul of another, till we live a new life in hers, and become her saviour and her shield. When St. Paul said, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law," he stated feebly and negatively the exact truth. He should have said, "Love worketh all possible good to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." It will not do to leave our neighbour alone and do him no harm; love bids us be active, and attentive, and do him all the good we can. *Then* love is the fulfilling of all human obligations. If we were wholly and continually under the influence of love, and not sometimes under the sway of selfishness, our whole lives would be blameless, sin would be no more, and human life—ah! it would be too sweet ever to lay it down.

But love teaches us that goodness is identical with the supremest happiness of man. It is not identical with physical happiness, it is often at war with that,

and its terms with our animal nature are unshrinking submission, and if need be, the self-sacrifice of life itself. Yet strange—most strange—when we suffer most for one we love we reap our highest joys; every wound is a healing of the spirit; and as we lie on Love's altar bleeding, gasping, dying, we reach the sublimest region of human bliss.

Think what the old poets have sung, what the Bibles of all lands have enshrined, what tradition prizes as its noblest treasure. They all sing in praise of love—love which began by heroic self-conquest and ended in death; but one and all bear the same testimony:—the joy of dying for love was worth all that life itself could ever purchase.

In those tales of the Far West by Bret Harte, to which I have alluded, there is unfolded a perfect gospel of this human triumph. Amidst scenes of appalling horror, the most brutal savagery, and the most abandoned lawlessness, he brings to view this one exquisite flower of humanity, and shows how love was at the bottom of those fierce hearts; how it stayed the murderer's hand, how it softened the impious tongue, and brought men whose lives had been fouled by the worst of crimes to die the noblest martyr-death. No Christ could do more than these and hundreds and thousands of our fellow-men have done for each other, and are doing daily—and all for love.

Most of us will remember that fearful catastrophe to the *Northfleet* off Dungeness, which just five

years ago awakened so much sympathy throughout the land, and brought out afresh the glorious powers of self-sacrifice which belong to man. To some, the touching incidents of the captain's farewell of his wife might have seemed a conflict between love and duty. But love and duty are one, they can never clash. It is always a duty to do what love desires. And love itself is best proved by doing our duty. Just think of those few minutes of parting agony. Amid the roar and screaming of rough men and women all struggling for their lives, some so fierce and frantic in their terror that they must be kept back from swamping the boats by the captain's revolver, his young wife, a bride of seven weeks, pleads to be allowed to stay and die at her husband's side. Her love, however, made her lose herself in him; and to make him happy, she would do his bidding and live in bitter grief all her days. Her love and duty were one. She would have stayed and died for love, she left him for a life of woe—no less for love. It was all she could do for him—to live because he asked it. And he, in his keen sense of duty, knew that to desert his ship even for his wife's sake would have been no act of love to her. To bring with him into safety a soiled reputation and an honour stained would have been far more cruel than to have bid her farewell for ever. So for love of her as well as for duty's sake he stands firm as a rock, and fighting God's battle for the weak against the strong until the surging waves engulf him, he dies a hero and a martyr—and

around his cross let us say in solemn reverence, "Truly this was the son of God."

Are there no more like him? Yea, thousands on thousands; the earth is full of such heroes, though we know them not, and their lives and deaths have been done in secret—no plaudits to give them courage, no eulogies spoken over their graves. Ask the generals who lead armies, the captains who carry their vessels all over the world; search the records of the Royal Humane Society, look into the hospitals and theatres, and the homes of the poor, enquire at the police stations, yes, and search the gaols and the galleys. Everywhere you will find such love as makes men and women Divine, raises them above themselves, *i.e.*, above all that selfish nature would make them. If you will only look for it, I believe every one you meet can show it, or has some heavenly story to tell of how it was shown to them. Let us not say then that God has deserted His world, while He has given us love. "He left not Himself without witness in that He did us good," says the Apostle. But he goes on to say, "in giving us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." I will not question the general benevolence of the arrangements of nature; but they are not worth looking at by the side of the marvellous gift of love which He has given to men to make them fruitful in all virtue, triumphant over all appetites and passions, and full of joy unspeakable and full of glory. This great gift, I say, is so antagonistic to the laws

and forces of nature that it cannot have had its origin in the visible universe whose laws it sets at defiance. It cannot be of the earth, earthy; it must be the Lord from Heaven. It must be an *afflatus* which is Divine. We cannot deny the influence which it wields. To see and hear of any noble act of love warms and melts the most frozen nature and breaks the heart of stone. All mankind, in various ways, bear testimony to the supremacy of love. Just as we admire a conscientious fool more than a clever rogue, so do we admire him who is impelled by love more than one who is only guided by a cold sense of duty.

Among the faculties of man, then, love holds the very highest place. It is the instinct of doing the best possible good. While reason is our guide to duty, and conscience is our authority for doing it, love leaps into the act without needing any sanction at all. To do anything for love is to justify the deed without any further plea.

I have only, then, to urge once more that as man is the noblest work in the universe, and as love is the noblest part of man, so we must infer that God cannot be a Being inferior to the most loving of men. God Himself is Love. He may be, and to our adoring eyes of faith, He really is, far and high exalted over His noblest creature; but *less than that He cannot be.* Whenever, therefore, we would conceive of Him, we must make the noblest part of the noblest man's character our starting point, or else we shall do violence to the first principles of reason,

and contradict the universal testimony of the human consciousness.

I believe it can be shown that, with the light of human love shed upon the scene, all that is most dark and sad and dismal in the world can be reconciled with the existence of a perfectly holy and loving God, and more than that, the miseries of the world become *proofs* and tokens of what God is, and unfold to us His nature in a more complete and intelligible manner, than had we been living in a fairy land, or had we been all our lives happy citizens of some Golden Jerusalem. If you shut out sorrow, you shut out the highest, purest, forms of love; and if you shut out love, you shut out God; and so, we come back out of our clouds of sorrow to praise His Glorious Name for every wounded heart, for every scalding tear, for every last farewell!

PART V.

"*In Him we live and move and have our being.*"

ACTS xvii. 28.

WE have arrived now at that point in our meditations at which it will be desirable to recapitulate the conclusions we have reached as to the nature of man, and to state the inferences to be legitimately drawn from them as to the existence of a Divine Being. By his intellect or reason man is able to read the pages of the book of nature, and to discover in external phenomena a considerable number of sequences, adaptations, purposes, which are summed up in one general term, the *Laws of Nature.* Even while professing to be an Atheist, he does not scruple to acknowledge the existence and activity of certain forces which are either themselves intelligent, or are impelled by intelligence. Man can no more escape from this demonstrated fact—now that science is so firmly rooted—than he can jump away from his own shadow. The grander the discoveries, the more deep and comprehensive the theories of the world's evolution and order, the more manifest is the intelligence by which the whole is directed and controlled. Atheism is thus rendered every day more and more a stumbling

block to the scientific observer, he is less and less able to eliminate Supreme Reason from his theory of the universe, the more he sees and knows of what the universe contains, and how it has been evolved. But anxious to retain an Atheistical profession, while driven from Atheistical convictions, he will transfer from a personal Deity those intellectual forces which he is bound to recognise, and he hands them over to Nature herself, investing matter with those originating and directing powers which the popular mind had hitherto ascribed to God alone. These powers, however, are too obviously there to be got rid of or explained away. The intellect of man is absolutely compelled to acknowledge intellect somewhere and somehow as the root and basis of phenomena. Now this is a step gained of the highest importance. It is really a meeting point on common ground between the Theist and the Atheist. They may differ widely still as to the centre of this intelligent force, or whether it is all-pervading and immanent in every atom of the universe. But the Theist ought not to mind this, because while his faith and trust in a living God are resting altogether on higher and firmer ground than any philosophy can furnish, he readily owns that he knows nothing whatever as to the essence of the Deity, and still less of the mode of relation subsisting between Him and the visible world. It is not his function, nor can it be his interest, to involve himself in problems which are *primâ facie* insoluble, and the solution of which, were it pos-

sible, would not bring him one step nearer to God.

If intelligent activity be admitted by the Atheist, that is equivalent to all that the Theist would *on this score* claim to be an attribute of the Divine. The only quarrel left would be about words and names —the Theist calling that intelligence God, or a manifestation of God, the Atheist calling it "Nature," or the operation of natural laws. We do not seek for compromise, still less for any unworthy concessions, but it is at least right and expedient not to represent the gulf between us and our opponents wider than it really is. Up to this point then we are agreed in attributing intelligent activity to the motive forces in Nature. We have, however, a hint to throw out to our Atheistical friends on this same subject of intelligence. We start from the undisputed fact that man is the only intelligent being we know of, *i.e.*, in our own high degree of intelligence.

I must here guard myself against misconception. There is abundant proof that some animals, *e.g.*, the elephant, the horse, the dog and the cat, and even some of the birds, exhibit, though in a very low degree, powers of reasoning similar to what we observe in ourselves. But when we compare the most notable instances of this intelligence among the lower order of animals with the intelligence of cultured man, by which he is able to form abstract ideas, to read and write books, to evolve science, to pursue speculations and to make discoveries, to

invent wonderful machinery and contrivances, and to investigate the laws of Nature, we at once perceive the necessity of placing man by himself as the only intelligent being known to us.

Speaking then, in a comprehensive manner, we may broadly say that the objects around us, men and women only excepted, are destitute of intelligence. We should be only talking mere poetry if we ascribed intelligence such as ours to the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea; still more if we ascribed it to the trees and fruits and flowers, to the rocks and hills, the murmuring streams and the heaving sea. We know they are not intelligent. We take up a stone, it may be a bit of flint, or a glittering diamond; it cannot think, it is not conscious, it has no idea of its origin, or uses, or destiny. It may be, nay it surely is, immortal—not in form, but in substance; its particles can never perish nor be diminished. But it *knows* nothing of all this. Everywhere we are met by the same conditions. The most highly organised as well as the most simple and elementary substances (man only excepted) are destitute of reason. The earth we live in is a mass of these substances, the sun, moon and stars are also masses absolutely unintelligent, moved, but not self-moving, undergoing changes it may be of inconceivable vastness and grandeur, but having no intelligence by which to organise either change or motion, no consciousness of the mighty powers which play upon them, or of the grand issues which those powers *evolve.*

Now if, in spite of this universal absence of intelligence from the objects of our observation, we are nevertheless forced to acknowledge intelligence in their combinations and relations; Is it not—I ask the Atheist—Is it not far more probable that the intelligence is, so to speak, centered in one great mind which is supreme over the whole, than that it should be scattered and dispersed over the various and conflicting forces?

Is it not both natural and reasonable to suppose —for we must assume something—that the supreme mind bears some such relation to the world, as the mind of man bears to his own life and operations; that there is, as it were, a centre of residence from which the emanation of all forces proceeds? Taken by itself, I grant the foregoing is not conclusive as an argument, but the analogy is good as far as it goes. To confound the intelligence, already admitted, with the instruments by which it works, and still worse with the intelligent productions which it has evolved, is as unreasonable as to confound my mind with the hand I use in writing, the pen I hold in it, the ink with which it is filled, and the paper and marks on it which form the sermon which by these unintelligent agents I have produced.

Yet, it must not be supposed that we attribute to our God the same organism of thinking, or the same method of working as that to which finite men are restricted. All that is claimed is a parallel between the mind of man producing effects by the

intelligent use of existing forces, and the supreme mind producing effects by a similar intelligent activity.

To sum up what is here said:—

Atheism must choose between intelligence and chance. If it explains the universe by the theory of chance, it becomes hopelessly unscientific. If it chooses intelligence, it must assert that the intelligence inheres either in the forces or in the matter which those forces move. If in the matter, it ceases to be Atheism and becomes Pantheism. If in the forces, as distinct from the matter, then Dualism is admitted, and the superiority of mind over matter follows as a corollary; and so far as the intellectual part of the question is concerned, the Atheist who granted that the intelligence resided in the forces, would scarcely be distinguished from the Theist, who, while denying intelligence to inhere in matter, does not venture to decide how the supreme mind works, whether by intelligent or by unintelligent forces.

I certainly never intended to trespass on the field of metaphysics, but this is how the case appears to common sense, and sometimes that comes nearer to the truth than whole treatises of so-called philosophy.

It is of course possible to conceive of things of which we have had no experience; and so we may reasonably conceive of intellect apart from a human brain. But we cannot conceive of intellect apart from consciousness. To think, is at the same mo-

ment to know that you are thinking. And this consciousness is the mark or property of individuality. You must be a person in order to think, you must be a person in order to be conscious. In this sense only do we ever apply the term "personal" to God. No sane man considers God to be a magnified man. We did not need a Matthew Arnold to make merry over such an absurdity in the nineteenth century. But there is nothing whatever unreasonable in the inference, legitimately to be drawn from the evidences of intelligence in the universe, that the Being who is thus intelligent—of necessity, therefore, conscious—should be a Personal God as distinguished from the Pantheistic notion of an unconscious God, the unconscious sum total of things, or Strauss's *universum*. So much depends on the integrity of this idea, that while we repudiate with heart and soul the anthropomorphism which ascribes human weakness and limitations to the Most High, we do claim that idea of individuality, or personality, or consciousness, as a necessary element in our conception of a God whom we can worship, and trust, and love. We cannot get away from ourselves; we must use language and imagery drawn from what we see and know; and we need not be frightened by the bug-bear of anthropomorphism into renouncing the idea of God altogether because we cannot, and we know that we cannot, ever worthily conceive of Him, or know Him as He is. The mind of man is our only key to the mystery of our own existence and of the great world around us. We should be foolish indeed to let it lie rusty

because it cannot open *all* the avenues to worlds unknown, or refuse to search for knowledge on any subject simply because we cannot know all about it. If God has no mind like ours, then reason herself teaches that He must have something higher still, of which our intellect is a most feeble adumbration. But nothing will ever persuade me that the Ordainer and Ruler of this world does not know—in the sense that I know it—the multiplication table, or any other laws relating to numbers or space which men have with difficulty acquired and abundantly verified.

Let us now turn to the Conscience of man and see what legitimate inference is to be drawn from the fact that we carry in our breasts a monitor who always urges us to do the best that we know, and to avoid the evil.

Bearing in mind what was said in my third discourse about the Conscience, we find that the Conscience brings us into an entirely new kind of contact with the unseen Ruler of the world. Man is endowed with a perpetual witness for righteousness which cannot be silenced. The one law of Conscience is, "you ought to do what is right." Now, as this is but one product out of all the other products of the universe, we must do one of two things in accounting for its presence. Either to attribute it to the same intelligence which has produced or evolved all the rest, or to assume for it an entirely new and separate origin. The latter alternative is manifestly opposed to the general current of modern thought, and does violence to the great principle of the unity of nature

which Science is helping to establish more firmly every day. If we adopt this, we come round to a new form of Dualism, and admit as rival powers a supreme intelligence, and a supreme moral governor: such a choice would be as unwelcome to the Atheist as to ourselves. Nor need we adopt it in the presence of the fact that intelligence, though not moral in itself, is ever the necessary adjunct to the fulfilment of what conscience demands. While the conscience commands us to do right, we need the intellect to show us what *is* right. These two forces, therefore, are in perpetual alliance, and are, though perfectly distinct, perfectly harmonious. There is, then, no reason for not ascribing the conscience to the same source as that to which we refer the products of intelligence. God is the author of neither or of both.

But inasmuch as the experience of man is entitled to be heard on this point, we claim, in proof of the Divine origin of the conscience, that it owes all its tremendous force and permanency to the sense within us that it speaks as it were the voice of God; that when we obey its behests we are doing His will, and whenever we disobey them we are rebelling against Him. This has been hitherto the experience of mankind, and it will need a total revolution of human thought before that experience can be nullified.

It has been said, I know, that this sense of Divine authority in the conscience is a matter of education. It may be so, but I boldly deny that this has ever been proved. The power and influence of conscience

are, no doubt, like other faculties, capable of increase or diminution by culture or neglect, but I maintain that it exists as a human faculty just as the intellect or sight or hearing, and is an essential property of the human being. Yet, even granting that it is a matter only of education, transmitted from very early times, we have still to account for its first appearance and its universal acceptance. Take the first of our race who associated conscience with Divine Law. How did he invent such a notion? Was it not an act of evolution similar to the thousand other processes by which man has become what he is? Is it any the less likely to be true because there may have previously existed men who did not recognise in conscience the voice of God? If the idea, once started, held its ground and spread universally over our race, that at least affords *primâ facie* probability to the idea that it was an act of progress, of real improvement, and lifted mankind from a lower to a higher scale of being.

The testimony of conscience to the moral character of God is overwhelming; that is a question altogether by itself, but as an indication of the existence of God at all the conscience is, so to speak, the opening of a door to the very presence of God, different—far different—from the conclusions drawn by processes of reasoning, and yet confirming those processes and those anterior conclusions by a new and irresistible kind of conviction. To those who derive conscience from an early social instinct, it is enough to reply that while conscience demands, of

course, our regard for social interests, it altogether violates its supposed origin by making us at times go dead against our public opinion, and demands of us the complete sacrifice of name and fame, and the justly-prized regard of our neighbours and friends. To strip the theory of all verbiage, conscience is said to be the development of the love of approbation. And yet conscience in its highest development will bid us stifle that same love of approbation, and expose ourselves deliberately to public scorn and hatred! However, we must not forget that the questions as to how the conscience arose, and how its mandates came to be identified with an unseen moral governor, have nothing whatever to do with the question as to the fact that we *have* consciences, and that they do assuredly testify to a God who gives them His Divine authority.

Just as the material objects around us sink in human estimation before the superior power of the intellect which ordained them and of the intellect which can read and interpret them; so do the most skilfully devised of all the intellectual processes of nature sink in human estimation before the grandeur of the moral law and the transcendent claims of an enlightened conscience. We are as we are made, and if we will not learn the ample lessons to be drawn from the study of ourselves, there is no other book, no other teacher, that can give us wisdom.

Take God away for a moment, and what is left for conscience to rest upon? It is true it will still say to us, "Do what is right." But then it is in the

power of any man to say to it, "Go to, I will not be your slave. I am no longer fettered by the old superstition that I had a Maker, and that it was His law, and His will that I should obey you. I will now do as I like. If I have no God to reign over me, surely I will not be the slave of man. I have an equal right with all the rest to do as I please, and I won't be plagued and hand-bound by your interference. I have done with you, and I shall now follow my own bent and pleasure, and if this course leads me into doing what you call 'wrong' I will take good care not to be found out." Logically, the man would be quite right. Not that I believe he could do so in practice. And why? Because there *is* a God, and we cannot escape from Him if we would. He who made us what we are and gave us consciences will not be willing to let our theories override entirely the moral forces which He has created for the guidance and control of mankind.

I must reserve for another occasion the inferences to be drawn from the possession of our still higher faculties—Love and Religion.

PART VI.

"*In Thy presence is fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*"

PSALM xvi. 11.

DID it never occur to you to notice the intimate connexion between Love and the religious instinct? I believe experience will bear me out in saying that the most loving natures are as a rule the most religious. I have found corroborative evidence of this in the fact that very many persons whom I have known to be destitute of religious instinct and practically atheistic were at the same time singularly devoid of ardent affections. There was a coldness, a hardness, a stoicism about them which invariably accompanied their utter want of religious emotion. In contemplating this fact it struck me that the possession of a warm heart was in itself a qualification for the perception of a Divine and Loving Ruler of the world. A heart filled with a glowing friendliness to all around, and which revels in the contemplation and in the exercise of a wide benevolence, feels the necessity of an all-sheltering, all-compassionate Love in which every weak and suffering creature can find refuge.

Here it must be borne in mind that there are various classes of Atheists whose Atheism springs

from different sources and consequently bears quite a different character. There is an Atheism which springs from an intellectual pride, a kind of revelling in the idea that there is no Supreme Intelligence nor Moral Governor above man. But there is also the Atheism which arises out of pure inability to realize the idea of God, or to perceive the reasonableness of the arguments brought forward in its support. The latter says "I do not know, but I wish I could believe." The former says, "I not only do not know, but do not care, and I do not wish to believe." These are for the most part the cold and hard sort.

Not to repeat here the argument already dwelt upon, viz.: that as intellect and conscience in man naturally presuppose an origin which is itself intelligent and righteous, so Love suggests to us that it has sprung from an eternal fountain of Love in Him by whose will all things are—I pass on to observe the unreasonableness of supposing that man alone in the universe is possessed of this unspeakable gift. As a mere question of probabilities, it is indefinitely more probable that the Source and Ruler of all things is a Being full of love, than that one of the mere products of the universe—man—should be so infinitely superior to that which produced him. As I shewed two Sundays ago, man's Love is man's highest bliss, and in the moments of that supreme ecstasy he cannot help being full of gratitude and pouring out his thankfulness in songs of joy and praise.

To whom or to what are his praises due, if not to the Great Heart who designed and bestowed this exceeding bliss? Will he thank the earth and the sun by whose mysterious nuptials he sprang into existence? Will it content him to glorify his parents, his ancestors, and the long line of animated creation which preceded them in the remote past? All this is absurd—as impossible to the Atheist as to ourselves. If there be no God, the sense of gratitude for our highest joy is simply impossible, or would be ridiculous. We cannot thank the bread and the wine of our daily food for the strength and cheerfulness they impart. Neither can we feel gratitude to any but a personal conscious Giver of those gifts which make our lives sublime.

Man has ever interpreted the world by himself. He has seen around him only what he felt within: in his earliest stages what was lowest and worst within his own breast was reflected on the objects without, entailing all the miserable mistakes and mischiefs of Fetichism; then followed the less degrading ideas of Polytheism; and as he emerged into more manly life the higher and nobler part of his nature became the new interpreter of Nature's problems—his Reason, his Conscience, and his Affections all speaking to him of One who was wise and holy and loving. If this were all a mistake, then man is indeed a fallen creature, and not a risen one. Then the godless ape from which he sprang was so much better than he, inasmuch as the ape at

least knew the truth that there was no God, and was in possession of a wiser philosophy and a truer creed. If there be no God, man has indeed shown evidence of a retrogression which no other field of Nature can exhibit. To regain his pristine dignity he must unlearn all his errors and go back to the primitive simplicity and truth of the beast. The higher and purer and more sublime in his eyes is the image of God, which fills his soul with loving adoration, the greater has been his defection from original integrity, the wider has been his departure from original truth!

When his redemption may be accomplished and his return to pre-savage Atheism may be effected, I do not pretend to foretell. I only know for a fact that the higher he rises in the scale of humanity, in the possession and exercise of all that is noblest in human faculties, the more lofty is his conception of God and the more close and vivid is his communion with Him. To get over this stumbling block is a feat which I have never seen performed, and until it is removed, I, for one, must still remain a believer in evolution, in man's progress and in the Divine Ordainer thereof; and will still obstinately refuse to believe in man's fall or the total depravity of his Reason by religious emotions which have no basis in fact. Let us dwell on this subject of religious emotion for a little space.

Man is undoubtedly a religious being; he has in all races and under almost all conditions within the limits of history manifested a belief in a Divine

invisible Being, and in his own dependence on that Being; and in most cases that belief has not been a merely intellectual conviction, nor purely an emotional sentiment, but also an influence which has ruled his life, regulated his conduct, and inspired his hope. No one will deny this fact of man's nature. Not even the Atheist disputes it, while the Apostle of Positivism endeavoured to turn it to account in the establishment of his own form of Atheism.

The argument which the believer in God would draw from it is this: As nearly all mankind have believed in some God, there surely must be a God. The universal idea in the human heart must have a corresponding reality in fact. To this the Atheist gives answer that men have been deluded in this matter, just as they have been deluded into so much error besides. Moreover, that the belief in God is inherited prejudice, the result only of erroneous education; and that men would never have believed in God unless they had been taught to believe in Him from their early youth.

Now in reply to this last assertion, we first of all admit the immense importance of teaching and training, especially in religious matters which have been generally taught authoritatively as dogmas, some of which could not have survived the progress of intelligence but for such dogmatic method of transmission. But this will not account for the origin of religious ideas in the first instance, or explain the fact that whole races of men, widely

separated from each other from their earliest origin, possess, in common, religious feelings and beliefs though their creed and culture be ever so different. If religion be due to training and nothing more, how could religion ever have originated? The first founder of each of the various Fetich, Polytheistic and Monotheistic religions, must himself have spontaneously generated the religious idea, even if all his disciples and successors owe their religion to him. Religion, too, must be very welcome to man, or the teachers of it would not have succeeded so well in making it universal among mankind. Even supposing it to be not instinctive universally, it must have been instinctive in the first men who set religion afloat in the world; and it is for the Atheists to account for such spontaneous generation of the religious element, not in one place or in one age only, but in many places and in many different periods of our history.

The probability here is on the side of the opinion that religious feeling is as much one of our natural possessions as the reason, the conscience and the affections; that man is as naturally qualified to believe in and to feel his dependence on a Divine Being as he is to reason, to respect the voice of conscience and to feel genuine love. This is much more probable than that religion is an artificial excrescence which will one day slough off, or a mere prejudice, which like other errors will be outgrown. And be it observed that I speak not of the various forms in which the religious sentiment in man has

been clothed, and whose name is Legion, but of that one common element in them all—the recognition of a Divine Being on whose will or providence man depends, and from whom his very existence is derived.

I now pass to the consideration of the former and more important objection made by the Atheist, viz., that religion is a delusion similar to many other delusions which have been universal or nearly so, but which have faded before the dawn of brighter knowledge and higher culture.

It is most certainly true that the earlier forms in which religious belief has been clothed have all had to be laid aside as obsolete; they have all in turn decayed, waxed old, and at length vanished away. Those now remaining are tending with various degrees of rapidity to the same end. They must "all perish and wax old as doth a garment," and as a vesture the hand of time will fold them up and they shall be changed; but the religion which they embodied shall be ever the same, its years shall not fail. Our own embodiment of religious belief must also pass through a refining process. But the essence itself is imperishable, and will last while the human race endures, while common sense looks out with steady gaze upon the wonders of creation, while moral sense bids us obey the still small voice of conscience, and while true love throbs in the human heart and tells us what is bliss. Religion is co-eternal with man, and though it may and surely will suffer its eclipse, and be darkened over by our

own clouds, or hidden periodically by our social and other revolutions, yet it will ever and anon return, rising over our reviving love of truth and goodness, melting and scattering our clouds of earth-born error, and shining ever more brightly for its temporary eclipse.

The Atheist may cry out, "Ah! it is all a delusion." But whether or not it be a delusion, it has been the most powerful influence for good which has ever swayed mankind, and it is on this ground that we cannot reasonably regard it as a delusion. It is in the highest degree improbable that the most powerful of all the influences for good which have swayed mankind should be based on a falsehood. It is in the highest degree improbable that any goodness can be the direct and immediate offspring of so profound an error. We invariably find that moral evil treads on the footsteps of falsehood, that moral good follows as surely on the discovery of truth. In so far as what is true in religion has been acting upon mankind, it has acted only for the common good; in so far as falsehood was mixed up with it, it wrought only for evil.

We agree with the Atheist in lamenting the gigantic evils which have been perpetrated in the name of religion. We admit to the full that religion, as it is sometimes received and understood, has been the world's bitterest curse; that it has crushed the noblest virtues, and enthroned the most degrading vices; that it has set at nought the laws of the living God and trampled on the just claims of

man; that it has been the prolific mother of the worst forms of tyranny and cruelty; that the most horrible tortures ever endured by man are to be laid at its door; that it has frightfully aggravated the terrors of death. The history of the Church of Christ would be enough to prove this, without travelling further in search of evidence. But in spite of all this, I still say, religion itself is the highest boon God has granted to men. For it was not the truth, but the falsehood gathering round the holy element of religion, which turned it from being a blessing into a curse. What was true in religion all through those fearful scenes of its perversion still burned brightly and lit up the horrible darkness. The sense of God's friendliness nerved the martyr's courage, made him face undaunted the ferocious mob of priests, and helped him to die with the words of love and truth upon his lips. It is because religion is so powerful in its influence that the derangement of it by falsehood was so pernicious. Had it not been so interwoven with all man's hopes and fears, with every sentiment, with every pulse of his life, the injury done by error in his belief would not have been so deadly. But because it is all in all to him, both for his well-being and well-doing here and for his hope hereafter, the slightest aberration from truth and rectitude in his religious belief, when not immensely counter-balanced by other influences, naturally plunged him into a fanaticism bordering on ferocity or despair.

As no one would consider it fair to blame Christ

for the catalogue of foul crimes perpetrated in his name, so no one ought to blame Religion for the outrages on mankind which have been done in the name of religion.

Religion is the sweet assurance of the Divine love and care, and the enjoyment of all the privileges and all the duties which that assurance brings. What has it not done for man? It has stimulated his intellect and cultivated his reasoning powers and thereby enlarged his knowledge, which in turn has acted for the well-being of his race. He loves to study the wonderful works of God, to watch their ever-changing beauty, to understand their subtle nature and their unerring obedience to the forces which guide them. Religion has been the cradle of science, the drop of honey in the student's cup, the pledge and promise that God would ever let him know more and more world without end. As his last hour comes, he lays aside his telescope, his microscope, his chemical tests, his unfinished mathematical problems, and, like a child lying down to rest in its mother's arms, he thinks of the bright and happy morrow when he will wake up again to pursue his glorious work in clearer light, with better instruments and with mind more vigorous for its delightful toil. It is the Great Mind behind it all that gave a zest to his pursuit, it is the Great Heart of Love before him that makes him contented for a while with the sleep of death. Religion has been the life of his science. Religion assures him of its resurrection.

And what has not Religion done for the Conscience

of man? Surely here, if anywhere, Religion is a boon. The man whose feet are steadfast in the path of duty, whom terrors cannot daunt, whom bribes cannot allure, to whom conscience is the voice of God—surely he of all men is blessed by Religion. What would be the Conscience at all without an abiding conviction that it was the inward witness of God's will? A man might naturally refuse to listen to its claims if he thought it originated entirely with himself and had no Divine sanction. He would be a fool to thwart his natural inclinations in submission to a mere passing fancy of his own brain, or to pay any deference to a monitor which was nothing more than a ghost conjured up by a disordered imagination.

But Religion shuts out this possible absurdity, and makes us feel as it were face to face with a loving Friend whose will is echoed in our Conscience. No longer then are its mandates obeyed with a cold and mechanical regularity, but obeyed with a warm and grateful delight which makes the hardest service easy, and the most painful sacrifice a pleasure. Religion makes duty to be our delight; obedience to conscience a perpetual joy. To have actually pleased God, to have a sense that we with our real freedom have consented freely to do what our Maker desired us to do freely, is to receive a joy into our hearts surpassing all earthly joys below, and all possible rewards in the world above. Most true is the saying of the Psalmist, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

As Conscience is *not* regard for public opinion, is not tolerant of any unworthy motive, will not put up with any half-compliance, or evasion of its laws; so when fortified by Religion, it becomes too powerful for the whole world to withstand, and the crowds of living men have to give way and fall submissive at its feet. One such conscientious religious man has more than once moved the world and changed its moral aspect from bad to better. And it will be done again. But only when Religion is at the back of Conscience, nerving it for the fight.

Lastly, let us ask ourselves how has Religion influenced man in regard to his Love. Surely here, one might say is a department where Religion is not wanted, in which man rises superior to religion. Not wholly so. The man who regards God as the universal Friend, knows the higher joy of loving God. His own dear ones cannot always be near to him—they are not always faithful—they may, and they must, die; but God is ever near—He is always faithful—death can never touch Him. To love God is to be assured of loving Him for ever; to know that He would not cast us away like a withered leaf or flower when we began to fade. The love of our hearts for God has no drawbacks; there is no dread hour approaching when we must part from Him, no dark day in which the light of His presence is to be withdrawn. Religion thus exalts the affections of man and gives them an immortal object, therein promising him life for evermore.

Is this no boon to man? To have all the clouds

of fear rolled away, to have the sting of death plucked out, to have all doubts and speculations swept out of his path of duty on earth by perfect rest in the love of God? It is enough that he loves God to prove that God first loved him. And if God loves him, what possible fear of harm can cloud his mind or make his heart to quail? He can now attend to his earthly duties without distraction, and go on his way rejoicing, waiting patiently for the summons, but not morbidly longing for pleasures in store; contented and delighted with his present lot in the world, working for God while he is working for man, and lighted all along by the presence of One who never leaves him nor forsakes him.

In this way and by the same means is our love to each other strengthened, purified and consoled. Religion throws a halo over the head of every fellow-man. In its light we see in every one a child who is dear to God, and who is, therefore, in very deed our brother. Religion elevates our whole idea of the sacredness and holiness of man, will not suffer us to despise our brother, or look upon him as a clod of clay. It reveals all souls to us as citizens of an immortal Home of purity and peace, and fills our hearts with reverence when irreligion would only inspire contempt. Let them be as bad as they may, Religion bids us hope for their amendment, and to be assured of it as a certainty of God's good purpose. Have we not ourselves seen the benign influence of such a religion over hearts brutalized by selfishness and crime? It is Religion which has

ennobled our humanity, by enlarging our hearts and widening our sympathy and love.

But it has also consoled us. The bitter hour of laying our beloved in the dark tomb has come or will come to most of us; and in that hour we feel all the agony of love. Then if there be no God, no future, the ashes of a poisonous and treacherous fruit crunch between our teeth, and we may well curse the day on which we were born, and curse still more the day on which we began to love. Love grows and deepens, and binds its roots faster and stronger round our hearts the longer we live, the nearer we approach the dreadful hour of the last farewell; and then the crash comes, the utter misery and hopeless despair, the drowning of all hope in the relentless ocean of destiny. But Religion is at hand, whispering "God is love," "God is immortal," "God is true," "God is faithful," "God is nigh," and our drooping spirits rise, like the lilies in the sunshine after the storm, to greet the Heavenly message. We are taught by our love and by the agony of bereavement to be quite sure that we shall not be sundered for ever; that in God's good time our purest, highest, and most loving desires shall be granted to us, and we shall meet again to love each other better than before, and to bless the hand of the faithful Creator who hath done all things well.

Surely Religion is man's greatest blessing, for it enriches all the rest. It elevates, strengthens, purifies and consoles him, and it is contrary to all

reason that a power so entirely beneficial to mankind should originate in a delusion, and owe all its benign influence to a lie. To sum up the main points of these discourses on Atheism:—

We believe in God because in the world and in man there are intellect, beauty, virtue, love and religion. Atheists disbelieve in Him because they have not found Him in their crucibles nor seen Him through their microscopes and telescopes.

For the present I leave the subject of Atheism. If I have succeeded in stirring one unbelieving soul to reconsider the reasonableness of his position, or one thoughtful believer to take up the work, which I now lay down, for the benefit of this age, I shall be more than satisfied. But on whichever side lies the truth, Atheists and Theists can alike look forward with perfect confidence to that time when "we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free."

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FREE.

"*I have declared Thy righteousness in the great congregation; lo! I will not refrain my lips, O Lord, and that Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart, my talk hath been of Thy truth and of Thy salvation. I have not kept back Thy mercy and truth from the great congregation.*"

PSALM xl. 11, 12, 13.

ON reading over again the sermons addressed to our congregation, at St. George's Hall, in 1872, by Dr. George J. Wild, late rector of Bisley, I was remarkably impressed with the wisdom and value of the advice which he gave us in those early days of our enterprise. I much regret that these discourses have been so long out of print—a regret which you will, doubtless, share with me, after having heard the extract which I have read to you this morning. An incident occurred to lead me to re-peruse Dr. Wild's discourses, which it may interest you to hear. On Sunday last one of our supporters, from a distant corner of these isles, seized the opportunity afforded by a visit to London of attending our service. And as he stood in the vestibule watching

the exit of the congregation, thoughts filled him of his own wonderful deliverance from the chains of orthodoxy, from paralyzing fear of hell-fire—fear, not for his own soul but for the soul of a well-beloved son—thoughts of deliverance from superstitious and degrading views of God and of human destiny; and he realized once more the amazing privilege and blessedness of having come out of darkness into marvellous light. These thoughts were immediately succeeded by the following reflections, which I am sorry I cannot give in his own earnest and expressive language:—

"What a glorious privilege is this, to have found some truth at last; however small the fragment, or coated with extraneous matter, yet still a piece of genuine truth! But now I have got it, what shall I do with it? Shall I carry it away and hide it in my own bosom? Shall I wrap it daintily in a napkin, and only snatch a hasty and private glance at it at rare intervals? How I long to arrest one and another of these earnest people who come here regularly, and ask them solemnly these few questions:—

"Have you found a fragment of truth, here or elsewhere, that is to you exceeding precious? If so, what are you doing with it? Are you doing the utmost within your power to spread it abroad among your fellow-men? or are you selfishly keeping it away out of their sight and locked up in the solitudes of your own heart?" "To me," the speaker continued, "the responsibility of having found a truth, if it be but one, is so enormous as to overwhelm me

with a sense of obligation to bless with it all souls that come in my path. To have found it and yet not to try to impart it, seems to me both ingratitude and treachery."

Such was the substance of our friend's reflections, the earnestness and fervour of which it is impossible to transcribe. Where he resides there is "a famine of the word of the Lord." His starved and parched soul must pick up refreshment and food how and when it can. There is for him none of the help, none of the consolation, none of the cheering sympathy of meeting for worship and meditation with spirits kindred to his own. Perhaps it is on this ground that such an occasion possesses for him all the more value, and is pregnant with so much spiritual blessing. Be that as it may, we must all feel that those outspoken questions of his ought to be put, and ought to find answers no less earnest and heartfelt.

These questions, you will surely own, are more for yourselves than for me. The poor preacher, alas! unless he be a man of large and independent means, is ever exposed to the taunt, however libellous and unjust, that in trying to spread the truth he is merely exercising a professional function, that, however pure and unmercenary his motives are, he does it because it is his business, the particular occupation which suits his taste or his limited powers, and he is not solely animated by the love of God, by the love of truth, and by the love of men. We of the pulpit must bear this burden of reproach as part of

our cross, part of the sacrifice which every one from the least unto the greatest must ever render in doing his duty to God and man. But you of the congregation are exempt from the possibility of any such reproach. You are the volunteers and not the regulars of the great army of truth-seekers and truth-finders. Yet if this be so, your love of the truth and of your fellow-men will be measured by your zeal and courage in the holy war, and not by your skill and generalship. It is not for me to reproach any of you with inactivity or fainthearted-ness, with a lack of daring and enterprise. Those only must reproach themselves whose consciences accuse them. If, then, I put these questions of our friend to you to-day in this public manner, it is only that you may ask them of your own hearts in secret. There and there alone may this tribunal be held. God alone "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid" can justly judge you, for "He is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things."

Our friend naturally assumes that our presence in this place—at all events of those who attend regularly—is a tacit acknowledgment of our belief that we have found some truth, some pearl of great price, which we would not part with for the whole world. And in the main his assumption is right, though I do not forget—nay, rather do I remember it with grateful satisfaction—that there are some few always with us who are still restless and doubtful, who are still longing to find ground for faith and

hope, and who, believing that in this place may some day be found the treasure on which their hearts are set, conscientiously put themselves in the way of finding it, and tread perseveringly the road which seems to them most likely to lead up to it.

But to begin on the broadest ground, which includes those who believe and those who are still only hoping to believe, let me ask you all: Have you not found some negative truth? Whether found here or elsewhere, have you not come to a strong and reasonable conviction that whatever else may be true, the main features of popular orthodoxy are false. Are you not quite certain that God, if there be a God, cannot possibly be unjust, or cruel, or merciless, or even unmindful of the creatures over which he rules? Are you not convinced that the dogma of the Trinity is an absurd contradiction and not a Divine mystery? Are you not convinced that the dogmas of the Incarnation and Atonement, in spite of all their poetic and tragic grandeur, are unworthy conceptions of the Divine dealings, and involve not merely puerilities but immorality also,—thus degrading God instead of honouring Him, and casting a cloud over the soul's image of perfect justice and holiness? Can you doubt any longer as to the utter and incredible falseness of the recently orthodox but permanently Scriptural [*i.e.*, New Testament] dogma of Everlasting Torments? Do not your souls at one time deride the notion as palpably ridiculous, and at another loathe it as the depth of blasphemy? Have you not come to the

settled conclusion that God has in no place and at no time ever made what is called a "Revelation" of Himself or His will to man; that neither Bible, nor Church, nor Sect, nor Pope, nor Priest, nor Minister ever had from God authority to impose any belief or opinion whatever upon the souls of men? Does not this conclusion lead you to be quite sure of the mischief arising from all such pretensions? We need ask no more questions of this kind. Herein we have a handful of truths—purely negative truths—which God alone knows how much of mental conflict, and perhaps of personal misfortune, it has cost to attain.

I know how poverty-stricken we should all be if we attained to none but such truths as these, if the sum of all our religious thought and costly struggle were to be only negative and destructive. You know that the key-note with which we began our work five-and-a-half years ago was the determination to combine the positive with the negative; the constructive with the destructive; to pull down only in order to build up; to clear the ground of the *débris* of ages that a firm and lasting foundation should be laid for the future temple of truth. None can accuse me of being false to the promise of those early days, or of having wavered for one moment in my fidelity to these fundamental principles. Yet even if the constructive be the end and the destructive only the means, I say we cannot gain the end without the means. We cannot, in short, get a sight of God, until we have thrown

down the idols which cast their cold shadow between us and Him. If the positive truths, the affirmations of our faith and hope, be ever so precious and paramount, it must be remembered that these truths cannot come into view until the negative truths have been first brought home to the hearts of those who were in bondage to superstitious fears. We need the negative truths as much as ever. Our work would not, could not, spread at all unless we were aggressive. We must attack Orthodoxy in all its subtle forms and drive it from its many secret caves where it would fain live a little longer. We must not only attack once and then run away to other occupation; but go on persistently attacking till the foe is slain. And I am sure, if we needed any proof of the wisdom and benefit of this course, we have a most encouraging one in the almost universal abandonment of that dogma on which the whole Christian superstructure is based, viz.: that of Eternal Torments. Nor can it be any vain conceit on our part if we claim a large share in the glorious work of its destruction.

To you, then, my friends, who have as yet found only negative truth, this question from afar comes home as much as to all the rest of us. What are you doing with your truth? Are you living in craven fear that your relations and friends will find out your possession of this illicit treasure? Do you go in and out among them, never showing your honest mind, never disclosing the convictions which, if they have not landed you in the heaven of faith

and hope, have at least rescued you from the ghastly terrors of endless doom, and wakened you from the horrible nightmare of an unjust and merciless God? Whatever you do, or forbear to do, in this awful responsibility God is your judge, not I. He alone can hold you guilty or guiltless of the sin of selfish misuse of the best treasure which heaven itself can confer on mortal man. But you must not shirk this judicial enquiry. You must put it before your own soul whether these heaven-sent talents are being put by you to noble and profitable purpose, or lying idle and rusty in mouldy darkness. Nor will it do to plead that you have no gifts of eloquence or persuasiveness; for your own solemn conviction of the falsehood of a thing based on reason and reflection is enough to give you *some* power of argument at all events; and in any case you will be judged according to what you have and not according to that you have not. Will you plead that the effort will entail too much exertion? Where, then, is the real value you set on your own deliverance? Or where is your real love for your brethren, your compassion for those lying under cruel bondage, your pity for those enslaved by fear? If you plead that the sacrifice is too costly, that much earthly misfortune or discomfort, if not ruin, threatens every effort to emancipate your fellows, then you proclaim yourself before the judgment seat of heaven to be but a poor coward after all, not much of a man, still less of a hero, and very much of a slave. It is not by such as you that the way will be cleared for

the advent of God's prophets of truth. Do your best, then. God Himself can ask no more. Do your best to give some of your precious treasure to those whose poverty of soul ought surely to remind you of your own, whose wretchedness and despair ought to move your sympathy and your pity; and in the time of God's reckoning with us all, you will have cause for neither shame nor self-reproach.

But now, if these questions belong to those who have only found negative destructive truth, how very much more must they be asked of those who have gained the infinitely greater prize of faith and hope? To believe God to be your best and everlasting Friend; to believe Him likewise to be the Friend of all mankind, and of every sentient creature under His Sovereign rule; to be no longer puzzled and perplexed by the past, discomposed and vexed at the present, or doubtful of the future; to be willing to leave every moral problem to the unravelling of distant ages, and to trust the destiny of all things in the arms of Everlasting Love—surely these are blessed truths which have turned our night into day, our sorrow into joy, the hell of our childhood into the heaven of peace and rest. And what are you doing with this faith and hope? What have you done hitherto? What do you intend to do henceforth? Are you hiding away these blessed convictions from your wife and children, afraid to let them know you have found a heaven of your own lest they should try to drag you down to their cold earth again, or upbraid you for your solitary enterprise?

Do you appear in your wonted House of Rimmon without any just or official excuse, and seal your lips lest they should betray your faith in a nobler Deity? Do you sell yourself to a base conformity, coupling therein the sins of dissimulation and treachery, and hindering what you believe to be true while helping to maintain what you know to be false? Have you made no sacrifice of time, money, or ease, to push on the spread of these happy, these holy convictions? *Sacrifices*, mark you! not merely parting with spare cash, but such exertions as are accompanied by pain and toil, and even humiliation. Would you not face the jeers of a crowd, or the sneers of a newspaper, in defence or furtherance of your own faith and hope? Is the esteem of your frail and not very heroic fellow-men of more value to you than the possession of a spotless conscience and of an unsullied truthfulness of word and deed? Are the hoards at your bankers and the vast acres of your estate more precious to you than the success and the honour of the cause which at heart and in your highest moments you admit to be more precious than rubies and the gain thereof than fine gold? Do you creep in and out of your heretical place of worship as if ashamed to be seen there, and dread the cross-questioning of friends who have missed you from your seat in the house of orthodoxy?

I do not, I dare not, put such questions to you. You must put them to yourselves and answer them in the face of Him in whose great love you profess to

believe. He is called by you the God of truth and sincerity; the knowledge that there is such a God, and the hopes to which that knowledge gives rise, all demand of you that you should be utterly true and sincere, that you should dread and shun all hypocrisy of every kind and degree, and that of Him and His truth you should be proud "to speak even before kings and not be ashamed." You know you do not deserve one of your many and glorious blessings if you blush to own that they are yours, and are even afraid to mention the gracious Giver.

We have had, and still have, a mighty foe to assail, an army of giants to smite and to slay. No wonder if our work be slow and our discouragements many. But nothing has ever hindered it so much or so deeply as the half-heartedness and insincerity and want of self-sacrifice on the part of some who have secretly wished well to our work but were afraid of confessing it. The trembling orthodox, trembling for their citadel, took heart again when they found such neutrals as these within their camp. They would forgive them any amount of scepticism, they would let them be rank atheists, if they liked, but so long as they did not openly join in the attack upon orthodoxy they were amply excused, and compromise covered the multitude of their sins.

If only a hundred have acted in this time-serving manner, they have done more to hinder our work than all the thousand bigots put together. Not to help in such a cause while admitting it to be a true one and a righteous one, is to betray it. "Help"

may be given in various ways, and must not be understood in this connection as only in the form of large sums of money; and perhaps the best kind of help is that moral support expressed by joining openly in our services and disseminating, without any false shame, the discourses and literature which expound our belief. Some of our friends seem to think it cannot make any difference to our progress whether strangers see their seats empty or full. If all came here at once who often come and who profess to like to come, we could not find room for more than a third of the number. If attendance at the service is no longer a duty, in the old superstitious sense of the term, it is, at least, a duty to support, in the most effective manner possible, any work of which our consciences approve, and which they tell us we ought not to neglect. How much more is it a duty to support a work like ours, which has had to make headway against the prejudices of society as well as the bigotry of churches and sects; which had to come forward single-handed and say, "If public opinion is against us, we will, then, convert public opinion." If society insists upon our submission, we reply to society, "No, we will not submit; you will have to come round to us: you must and shall be won over to our religious opinions." And, my friends, we are keeping our word. I have nothing to regret or to lament as to our progress out of doors. It is amongst those who have found the truth and heartily rejoice in it that we discern a faithless few who did not deserve the high blessings

of enlightenment, and who have not done their best to push forward our work, even while saying of it the most complimentary things and professing towards us the profoundest sympathy. No one need take this reproach to himself unless he deserves it. Neither will we constitute ourselves the judges of how much each one ought to bear for the spiritual and moral emancipation of his brethren. If we but examine ourselves, God and our hearts will set us before ourselves in our true light, as co-workers together with Him, or hinderers and slanderers of His truth.

I will conclude with a noble passage from Dr. Wild's Discourse on *The Responsibility of Rational Religionists*: and which, I am proud to feel, applies to the vast majority of our body.

"Though, indeed, some of you, having borne the burden and heat of the day, may go down to the grave while the battle is still raging, and our victorious flag not yet planted on the last hostile citadel, yet you shall not fail of the reward most grateful to the unselfish and brave. As you sink to rest you shall know that a happier race to come shall reap the fruit of your exertions, and when the long reign of superstition is at length over, and an enlightened posterity have come to regard many a gorgeous monument reared by selfishness and cemented in tears and blood no longer as an emblem of glory but as a memorial of ignorance and shame, then loving souls shall still hold you in their memories, and grateful descendants sometimes meeting round a

lowly tomb shall say—Here, at least, was one good soldier who gave his life for the common weal, who dared to stand by truth when her friends were few; who, when others were mincing their words or quailing at the world's frown, dared to look tyranny in the eyes and to call things by their right names."

APPENDIX.

THE question of the physical suffering of the lower animals is exceedingly liable to be misjudged when it is regarded—as it too frequently is—from a purely human point of view. It is true that of most things our knowledge must be regarded relatively to our own capability and powers of appreciation. But in the present instance, our capabilities and standards of comparison are largely augmented and enlarged through the data furnished by comparative anatomy and by the comparative physiology of nerve-centres. A nervous system may be defined as that which brings its possessor into relation with the world in which it lives. The more perfect the nervous system, the more intimate does the relationship between the organism and the world become. The nervous apparatus enables organisms to gain their knowledge of things around them through contact—direct or indirect—with these objects. To this contact we apply the general name of sensation; a term sufficiently appropriate, if we remember that in reality all our senses are but modifications of the sense of touch or feeling. "Sensation," in this view, must be clearly and carefully distinguished from "pain." From the neglect of this distinction, much confusion is likely to arise, and, I may add, has arisen, in the minds of persons unacquainted with the physiology of nerves. "Pain" may be defined as "over-acute sensation." We experience no pain when we exercise the sense of touch, this sense being exercised through the upper skin by the nerves of the under skin. But if we remove a small portion of the *epidermis*, or outer skin—itself nerveless and bloodless—and bring the *dermis*, or under skin with its nerves, directly in contact with any object, we experience pain—that is over-acute sensation. Even mental pain may be shown to fall under this definition of abnormal sensation, when we consider that the words or acts which may not affect a callous mind, will produce acute mental distress in a mind of more sensitive calibre.

"Sensation" and "pain" are thus allied, but essentially distinct conditions. The one is the intensification of the other. The utter inapplicability of human standards to measure or estimate the pain of lower forms of life, may be readily shown. Human pains, woes, and sorrows, are the outcome of the working of the highest form of nervous apparatus. On the type of this apparatus, the nervous axis of all other vertebrate animals is formed. Possibly it would be more correct to say that man's nervous axis represents the highest development of the vertebrate nervous system. Essentially, the same parts that occur in the fish, frog, reptile, or bird are to be seen in the human brain. Nature, in other words, has added few fresh structures to man's nervous axis, and has rather developed the human brain, on the principle of concentrating and localising the materials and parts found in lower life. Community of type, however, does not necessarily imply community of function. The results of the life of different grades of vertebrate animals clearly prove this. And *à posteriori* we might reasonably argue that if man's nervous acts and sensations represent the working of the most complicated nervous system known, it follows that the nervous acts of lower forms must decrease in a ratio corresponding to their inferiority as compared with the human type of nerve-apparatus. Judged by the standard of human sensations, rightly applied, we should argue that whilst a dog, from its nearness to human structure, will feel pain acutely, the sensations of a whale or dolphin will be of less marked character, those of a bird still more feeble, and those of a frog or fish infinitely different from the feelings and pains of humanity. And it must not be forgotten, that if the mere differences in relative and absolute size, bulk, and complexity of the nervous apparatus of vertebrates teach us this much, the fact that the reptile, frog, and fish are cold-blooded, will materially affect our estimate of their sensations. And this consideration of difference in temperature, as the physiologist would inform us, counts for very much, not merely in the transmission of sensations, but also in effecting variations in habits, and in the life of the animals at large. Thus "pain," judged by a structural and comparative standard applied to the nervous system of vertebrates, may be said to present a descending ratio and scale as we travel from the higher to the lower confines of the vertebrate type. If sensation decreases in inten-

sity, as it unquestionably does, pain must no less surely decrease.

What is the aspect of matters in lower life, and within groups of animals which want a well-defined nervous axis, consisting of brain and spinal cord, such as is the characteristic possession of vertebrate animals? The reply of the physiologist will be, that he has no knowledge that "pain"—judged by the human standard—has any existence in invertebrate animals. The opening of an oyster is attended with little response on the part of the animal whose shell-muscle has been forcibly riven. A worm, cut in halves writhes, and its motions suggest to the non-physiological mind notions of extreme suffering, because the worm is being judged by the motions of the human body, or by those of a higher animal in pain. The comparative anatomist shows that the writhing of the worm, after division of its body, is due to the fact that its nervous system consists of a double nervous cord lying along the floor of its frame, so that each half possesses abundant means for exciting and controlling muscular movement. If we regard the writhings as indicative of "pain," then we must accord to each nerve-mass in each joint of the worm's body, functions we are unaware are performed by any nerve-masses save those comprising the brain and other nerve-centres of vertebrates —a supposition in itself absurd. What has been said of the worm, will apply with greater force to a sea-anemone or a hydra. Both animals are highly sensitive, yet, in the latter, no traces of nerves are to be seen. When we cut either in halves, a new animal grows out of each half. Here, an immense amount of injury actually serves to reproduce the species. Are the writhings of the tentacles of a sea-anemone when the knife has slit it in two—an animal this, it must be remembered, which feels the operation so little that in due time each half becomes a perfect animal —to be taken as indicative of pain, or merely of ordinary, painless sensation? There can be no hesitation in choosing the latter alternative. It is impossible to believe in the existence of pain—and pain here would necessarily imply nervous shock of considerable extent—in the case of an animal which recovers so completely from an operation of the most serious kind when regarded by the standard of surgical authority. And in proof of the indifference of the hydra to equally serious interference with its life and structure, may be mentioned Trembley's experiment of turn-

ing one of these polypes inside out. One such metamorphosed hydra ate a worm two days after the operation ; and if perfection of appetite is to be accepted as a test of health or of indifference to the results of a serious operation, it may be granted that the polype had completely recovered from the effects of experimental manipulation. The hydra has no nerves; it recovers in two days or less from a serious operation: it may be sliced into mincemeat with the result of making as many new animals as there are pieces, and it writhes and moves its tentacles when touched. Are we to say then that it feels "pain?" If so, then the "pains" of humanity are not those of the hydra, but something immeasurably different—so diverse, indeed, that if we give an affirmative reply to this question we shall require to enlarge our ideas of pain to include mere sensation as indicated by the movements of animals, and we shall thus destroy the essential idea of the term we are using—these movements being performed in the utter absence of nerves. A sensitive plant droops its leaves on the slightest touch. Does the plant feel pain when a leaf is torn from its stem ? If the reply is to be negative because no nerves exist in plants, then it must be remembered that the animal hydra is equally nerveless. The lowest plants and animalcules are equally sensitive ; and in the border-land, where the lowest animals and plants meet in confusing array, sensation and feeling are present, but nerves are unknown.

It appears thus that wherever life is present sensation is developed. Sensation may be held to be an unvarying concomitant of life. Its beginnings in lower life are rude and feeble—marked, it may be, by the ill-defined movements of a speck of protoplasm which "feels" the contact of a food-particle, and engulphs the morsel by throwing its body around it. In many plants, sensation is as well-defined as in many lower animals, but the idea of pain does not apply to either. When animals are found with well-developed nervous systems, their movements become purposive and correlated, and disturbance of their parts is marked simply by an increase or disturbance of sensation, without the appreciation of the why and wherefore of the accident by any specialised nerve-centre or brain. When, however, we enter the domain of Vertebrate existence, we come upon well-developed nerve-centres; we see a gradually increasing consciousness as we pass upwards; and we also behold a new and higher sensation—

that of "pain"—developed, as the result of the possession of nerve-centres and consciousness. Whilst in man alone do we find the typical idea of "pain" to be represented, and his pains and sorrows may be regarded as a truly human and God-bestowed heritage; since through the exercise of his consciousness and faith, he learns through pain to know and value the pleasures and happiness of life.

[The reader may refer for further details concerning sensation, and its conditions in lower life especially, to two articles in the *Cornhill Magazine* for August 1877, and March 1878, entitled, "A Study of Lower Life," and "Can we separate Animals from Plants?" respectively.]

ANDREW WILSON, Ph. D., etc.

To those who hope and believe in the existence of a good and righteous God behind all the operations of Nature, there is, perhaps, no arrangement more perplexing or more trying to their faith than that which provides that a large proportion of animals shall live only by preying upon others. We are too familiar with the distressing details. There is the flight, the capture, the struggle—all the more piteous because so impotent—and, finally, the destruction of the victim: and this is going on continually all over the world. At first sight one's sense of justice and pity rises in revolt against such a plan. But it is worth while to enquire, so far as may be, whether it is altogether so indefensible as one might hastily conclude.

We know that the universe being constituted as it is, the phenomenon we call Death is a necessary and even beneficent factor in the product of the whole. Without it no life could be; it is indeed but a phase of the ever-revolving circle of activities. Granting this, it were then foolish to quarrel with death, as such. Thus the question before us is narrowed into one of *the difference in the amount of pain* involved in a natural death and one inflicted by a bird or beast or reptile of prey. Perhaps the former, as when it occurs from old age, is sometimes nearly painless; but there must be many forms of it to which animals are subject—such, *e.g.*, as death from thirst, or poison, or extreme

cold, as well as from diseases—in which their sufferings must be considerably more *prolonged*, and may even be little less *intense* than in falling a victim to some mighty foe. When, however, this does occur, let us consider what may be mitigating circumstances.

It is, we think, quite an open question whether, *on the whole*, the animal world loses in happiness and enjoyment through preying upon each other. Supposing there were no carnivorous creatures, or rather that those species while still existing possessed no predatory habits, but all fed exclusively on vegetable productions, what would the consequences be? For want of the check upon numbers supplied by the carnivora, all animals would so increase and multiply that in the struggle for existence, starvation would soon be the fate of the weaker ones; unless, indeed, before that point was reached, man did not—in order to secure his own food supplies—interfere and destroy them in self-defence. Neither of these alternatives appears to be greatly preferable to the one they would have escaped.

Then again, if all that sportsmen tell us be true—and many of them are not only humane, but also accurate observers of Nature—there are creatures to whom a fight or flight for life is not *all* pain. The fox delights to display his cunning—often successfully—in dodging his pursuers; the salmon seems proud to tax all the strength and skill of a clever angler to overcome and capture him; and probably these and similar qualities are brought into play in the encounter of one animal with another. For aught we know, it may seem to *some* of them, at least, better to die fighting for life than to perish miserably of disease, deserted by their fellows.

Further, we must not overlook the fact that many of the creatures devoured are also in their turn the devourers.

> ". . . . The grub eats up the pine,
> The finch the grub, the hawk the silly finch."

So that there may be set against the pain they suffer in being pursued, the delight they experience in pursuing, and which they could never have known but for the system called in question.

But there is yet a further consideration which may help more *than any other* to reconcile us to it. There can be little doubt

that in the majority of cases the victim is mercifully spared the worst pangs, through the magnetizing or benumbing influence exercised by the destroyer. Independently of direct "fascination," it appears that this power exists.

Dr. Livingstone's evidence on this point, given in his Journal, is most important and useful. He relates how, being attacked and all but devoured by a lion, during the actual onslaught of the beast, when he was beginning to tear him to pieces—moments when, as one would suppose, mental distress and bodily torture reached its climax—*he felt no pain whatever!* If he had been killed by the lion then and there, his death would have been painless. This testimony is invaluable. For it is, perhaps, the only instance on record of a man having been in such a position who escaped to tell the tale. Surely we may reasonably conclude that if this was the experience of a *man*, with his higher intelligence and greater sensitiveness to pain, it is also that of the lower animals, who probably are more amenable to the influence exercised.

We have been accustomed to consider "fascination" as a power existing more for the benefit of its possessor, as a means of enabling it thus more easily to secure its prey; but may it not also be a merciful provision for the victim itself, deadening its senses, and thus making the death less painful than it would otherwise be?

In regarding a matter of this kind we must be content to start at the outset with the admission that the scheme of the Universe is not based upon any idea of a ready-made "perfection" (which, indeed, even if it could be had, would probably be a poor and most uninteresting exchange for the present plan of *progress through suffering*), and therefore we must also be content to accept for the perplexities which are sure to arise, such considerations as show that the Ruler is not unmindful of any of His creatures.

At all events, man cannot decently complain of this predatory system in Nature until he himself has utterly abandoned the "pleasures of the chase" in all its forms, and forsworn the practice of slaughter in providing himself with food.

A. P.

PRINTED BY WERTHEIMER, LEA AND CO., FINSBURY CIRCUS, LONDON.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

		s.	d.
The Sling and the Stone.	Vol. V. . . . Price	6	0
,, ,, ,,	Vol. VI.	7	6
Defence at York.	. . . . .	1	0
Appeal to Privy Council	. . . . .	1	0
Ditto	. . . . . In Cloth	2	6

Published by Trübner & Co., *57 and 59, Ludgate Hill.*

Revised Prayer Book	2	6
Letters to the *Index*, reprinted—		
Reform in Burial Rites	0	1
On the Custom of Wearing Mourning.	0	1

To be had of the Author, *or on Sundays at Langham Hall*, 43, *Great Portland Street, where the* Author's Sermons *may also be obtained weekly. Price* 1*d. each.*